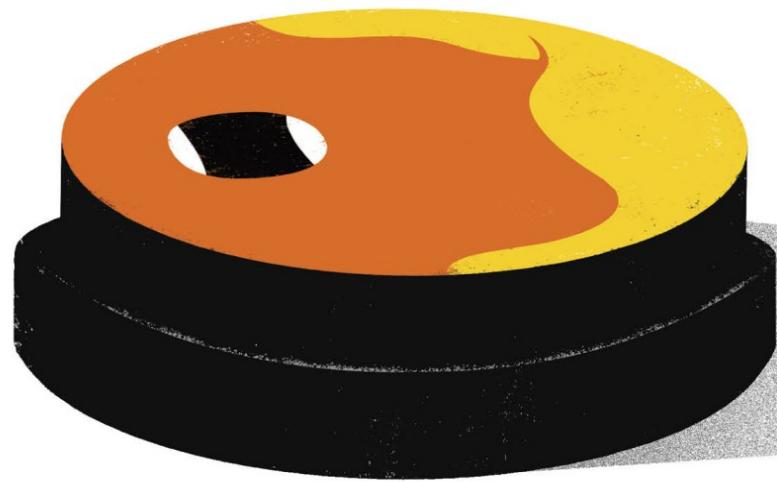


JUNE 24, 2024

# TIME



# TIME Magazine

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## Donald Trump Convicted in Historic New York Hush-Money Trial

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For six weeks, the former most powerful man in the world sat like an ordinary citizen in a drab courtroom, a criminal defendant being judged by a jury of his peers.

Donald Trump glowered, complained, bloviated, and snoozed during a trial both historic and tawdry over whether he falsified business records to cover up hush money paid to a porn star on the eve of the 2016 election. On May 30, the 12 jurors delivered their unanimous verdict: guilty on all 34 counts. To all his norm-shattering iterations—flashy businessman, name-brand showman, novice President—Trump has added a new title: felon.

The trial that led to the first-ever criminal conviction of a former U.S. President was often marked by its unseemliness. A motley cast of characters—the former porn star, the tabloid publisher, the crying press aide, the disgraced former fixer—recounted episodes of spankings, clandestine meetings, and payoffs, all intended to establish that Trump had criminally conspired to hide information about his behavior that could have affected voters' choices. But while the crimes may feel insubstantial, the stakes for American democracy are far weightier. [Trump](#) once again threatens to upend the precepts of the U.S. political system and test the foundations of the country's rule of law.

Trump will hardly be humbled by this outcome; he's already called the trial a scam and vowed to appeal, a process that could take months or longer. "This was a rigged trial. It was a disgrace," Trump said after he was found guilty. "The real verdict is going to be on November 5th by the people." As Trump runs against President Joe Biden in a tight race this fall, voters will have to grapple with questions both political and constitutional. The election is heading into [uncharted territory](#).



*[Buy TIME's Donald Trump verdict cover here](#)*

For now, the system has held: this was an orderly trial with a careful judge and a patient jury that listened to the evidence and rendered a verdict without falling prey to intimidation from—most notably—a famous defendant who repeatedly violated his gag order. “It really is a demonstration of an evolved system of justice that applies to all people,” says Harry Litman, a former U.S. attorney.

And yet the hush-money trial is widely viewed as the least serious of Trump’s criminal cases. Judge Juan Merchan may not even give him any jail time at the sentencing set for July 11. Trump is still facing three other criminal prosecutions—two over his attempts to

overtake the 2020 election and one over allegations that he mishandled classified documents. Trials focused on the former President as a threat to democracy and national security would strike more directly at what many view as the central issues of this election. But it's unlikely any of those cases will get to trial before Election Day. Now that the New York jurors have made their decision, it's up to the rest of the nation's citizens to define the true stakes of the Manhattan verdict. Because it's perfectly legal for a felon to run for President—even from behind bars—Trump's defense team always had an eye on a bigger audience outside the courtroom. “They [tried] this case for the public and not for the jury,” says Duncan Levin, a former Manhattan prosecutor.

Come November, voters will need to decide what it might mean to elect a convicted criminal to the highest office in the country—and how much power they're comfortable with that man wielding over the judicial system that has just held him to account.

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From the moment Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg announced charges against Trump more than one year ago, people doubted his unconventional strategy.

“It cheapens the term election interference to call this election interference,” says Richard Hasen, a professor of law at UCLA. Jed Shugerman, a law professor at Boston University, [called](#) the case “an embarrassment” that pushed the boundaries of prosecutorial ethics.

It is not illegal to pay someone “hush money.” On its face, Bragg’s evidence pointed to 34 misdemeanor counts of falsifying business records, for all of which the statute of limitations had passed. Bragg’s novel approach bumped each of those misdemeanors up to first-degree felony charges by alleging they were all committed to bolster another crime related to violating election laws, but Bragg didn’t have to prove that second crime. He argued that Trump was

intent on keeping Stormy Daniels' story about an old sexual liaison out of public view before the election to help his campaign.

Making such a nuanced case was bound to be challenging. Yet the reviews from legal experts of Bragg's team's performance heading into closing arguments were largely positive. Prosecutors were "successful at reframing this as essentially a disinformation operation on the 2016 election, not just the coverup of an affair," says Asha Rangappa, a lawyer and former FBI agent who is now a senior lecturer at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs.

Trump's lawyers, on the other hand, drew plenty of second-guessing for a legal strategy that revolved around denying not only the crime, but that Trump ever had an affair with Daniels. But when Daniels herself was called to the witness stand, she was convincing as she recalled meeting Trump during a celebrity golf tournament on the shores of Lake Tahoe in 2006, the initial encounter that set the events of the case in motion. She was 27 years old at the time and attended the event to promote a porn studio. Trump invited her to his hotel room where they discussed her appearing on his reality TV show *The Apprentice*, she said.

*[Order your copy of the Trump verdict issue here](#)*

Speaking quickly, Daniels described vivid details from her evening with Trump, including the Old Spice she spotted in his toiletry kit and the underwear he was wearing when she emerged from the bathroom and saw him on the bed. She recalled feeling as if Trump had the upper hand. "I did note there was a bodyguard right outside the door. There was an imbalance of power for sure," she said. "But I mean I was not threatened verbally or physically." She said she blacked out and the next thing she remembers, she was on her back on the bed. Daniels told the jury the sexual intercourse was brief, and Trump did not wear a condom, which concerned her.

While Daniels' account was embarrassing for Trump, to make their case, prosecutors needed to convince the jury that his decision years later to pay for her silence was intended to help his presidential campaign. Trump's longtime friend David Pecker, the former publisher of the *National Enquirer*, bolstered the prosecution's thesis when he described an August 2015 meeting in Trump Tower in which he agreed to be Trump's "eyes and ears" to help bury stories that might damage his White House aspirations.

The testimony from Pecker was crucial in showing that Trump intended to have stories about him bought and kept from public view, says Norman Eisen, a senior fellow in governance studies at The Brookings Institution and former counsel to the Democrat-led House Judiciary Committee during Trump's first impeachment. "Pecker established that they intended to make these payoffs to benefit that campaign from the time of the Trump Tower meeting in August 2015," Eisen says.

At the heart of the case was whether Trump himself had paid for Daniels to remain silent and obscured that payment as legal fees to his lawyer and fixer [Michael Cohen](#), a star witness in the trial. Prosecutors showed the jury a handwritten note written by a former Trump Organization executive outlining payments to Cohen. The note included a reimbursement for \$130,000, the amount Cohen paid Daniels. It was a "smoking gun document," Eisen says.

But Cohen's credibility was always one of the biggest vulnerabilities to the prosecution's case. In 2018, Cohen pleaded guilty to multiple crimes involving the hush-money scheme including lying to Congress and federal investigators. That's why one of the most damning moments for Trump may have actually come from Hope Hicks, Trump's former White House press aide who, unlike Cohen, has never spoken out against her former boss. The prosecution asked Hicks about a conversation she had with then-President Trump in February 2018, as news stories began to emerge that Daniels had been paid to stay silent about the 2006

sexual encounter. Hicks described Trump asking her how the news stories about his rendezvous with Daniels were playing in the press. Trump seemed relieved that the story had not come out earlier, Hicks testified. “He wanted to know how it was playing, and just my thoughts and opinion about this story versus having the story—a different kind of story before the campaign, had Michael not made that payment,” Hicks said. “And I think Mr. Trump’s opinion was it was better to be dealing with it now, and that it would have been bad to have that story come out before the election.” With that, the prosecutor said, “No further questions.” A few moments later, Hicks began to cry.

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Even before the verdict had been delivered, Trump and his team were looking ahead to the next major judgment to be cast on him: the 2024 election. His legion of running mate contenders and congressional allies showed up to support him at the trial, in lockstep and seemingly in uniform, with many wearing matching red ties. When they were all in a courthouse holding room on May 16, ahead of Cohen’s first day of cross examination, an aide brought Trump a stack of polls showing him [leading Biden](#) in several swing states. “Look at these numbers,” Trump said. “These are great.”

Now that he’s been found guilty, Trump intends to cast the conviction as proof that the trial was nothing more than a political hit job, sources familiar with the matter tell TIME. “Mother Teresa could not beat the charges,” Trump griped as jury deliberations began. The campaign is expected to craft a messaging strategy that depicts the verdict as a foregone conclusion engineered by Democrats who fear Trump’s return to the White House and tailor fundraising pitches around his continued legal peril.

[video id=FlgFv0Ze]

Trump is all but certain to emphasize his appeal, though that process is expected to stretch far past November. He would likely first take the case to the Appellate Division in Manhattan, and ultimately seek review from the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals in Albany, which already ruled against his multiple requests to delay the trial.

### **Read More:** *[How Far Trump Would Go](#)*

It's not clear how voters will respond. Polling suggests Trump could lose [nearly 10%](#) of his supporters if convicted of a crime, which could prove decisive in what's shaping up to be an incredibly close race. By the end of May, Trump was leading Biden in [an average of national polls](#) by FiveThirtyEight by a slim 41.3% to 39.9%. A [set of polls](#) released the same month by The New York Times, Siena College, and The Philadelphia Inquirer showed Trump leading Biden in five key swing states—four of those by 10 percentage points or less. While surveys have found Americans are most concerned about the economy, immigration, and abortion, Democrats are hoping Trump's status as a felon will repel the swing voters most likely to decide the election. As the trial wrapped up, Biden campaign officials were discussing internally how much to amplify a potential Trump conviction in their messaging and whether to run ads using the phrase "convicted criminal" to describe him. The campaign communications director Michael Tyler made a statement outside the courthouse the day of closing arguments, calling Trump an "unhinged, power hungry, self-centered man" and a "unique and growing threat" to democracy.

Privately, Trump's team recognizes they can't replicate the same strategy that propelled him in the primary, when Trump used his avalanche of legal woes to consolidate the Republican Party, raise millions of dollars, and undermine his rivals. But they're betting the New York case won't tip the scales too far in the opposite direction, either. "His alleged affair with Stormy Daniels is

something that Americans have known for years,” says a Trump operative. “It’s nothing new.” The proceedings also weren’t televised—New York state bans cameras in court—limiting the case’s ability to reach voters not already tuned in. “It wasn’t actually interesting television,” the source says. “You’re just hearing talking heads recap what they saw in a courtroom.”

There may be at least one way Trump’s trial has already helped the campaign. April, when the trial began, was the first month Trump [outraised](#) Biden, surpassing the incumbent by more than \$25 million. While Biden still has \$100,000,000 more cash on hand, the swing in fundraising momentum was a warning sign to Democrats. Trump sources attribute the profusion of donations to Trump’s plight in court and the syncing of the Republican National Committee with the campaign. That dynamic may continue as Trump’s three other criminal prosecutions and his appeal process in New York are likely to remain in various states of limbo through Election Day.

No one is sure how the ruling announced in a Manhattan courtroom will influence the world outside of it. If the conviction “doesn’t detract from his political success and he wins reelection, I can imagine this will not stand as a huge chapter in the book about Donald Trump,” says Julian Zelizer, a presidential historian at Princeton University. “It’s one of those cases where the outcome itself might not be as significant as what happens after the outcome in terms of his political future.”

There will be a relentless effort by both Democrats and Republicans to capitalize on the conviction, with each side knowing full well their designs center on a man with a history of defying political gravity. It was hard for most to imagine Trump could win the 2016 election after the *Access Hollywood* tape came out showing him bragging about groping women. It was even harder to fathom he would mount a political comeback after being impeached twice in his first term, leaving office with an approval

rating of around 30%, and unleashing a mob of his supporters to violently attack the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

For any other American politician, the New York verdict would mark the end of a career. For Trump, there's no telling what comes next. "The passion this guy stirs on both sides is unparalleled and will never be matched again," says a source close to Trump. "There's nobody like Donald Trump."

—*With reporting by Nik Popli/Washington and Simmone Shah/New York*

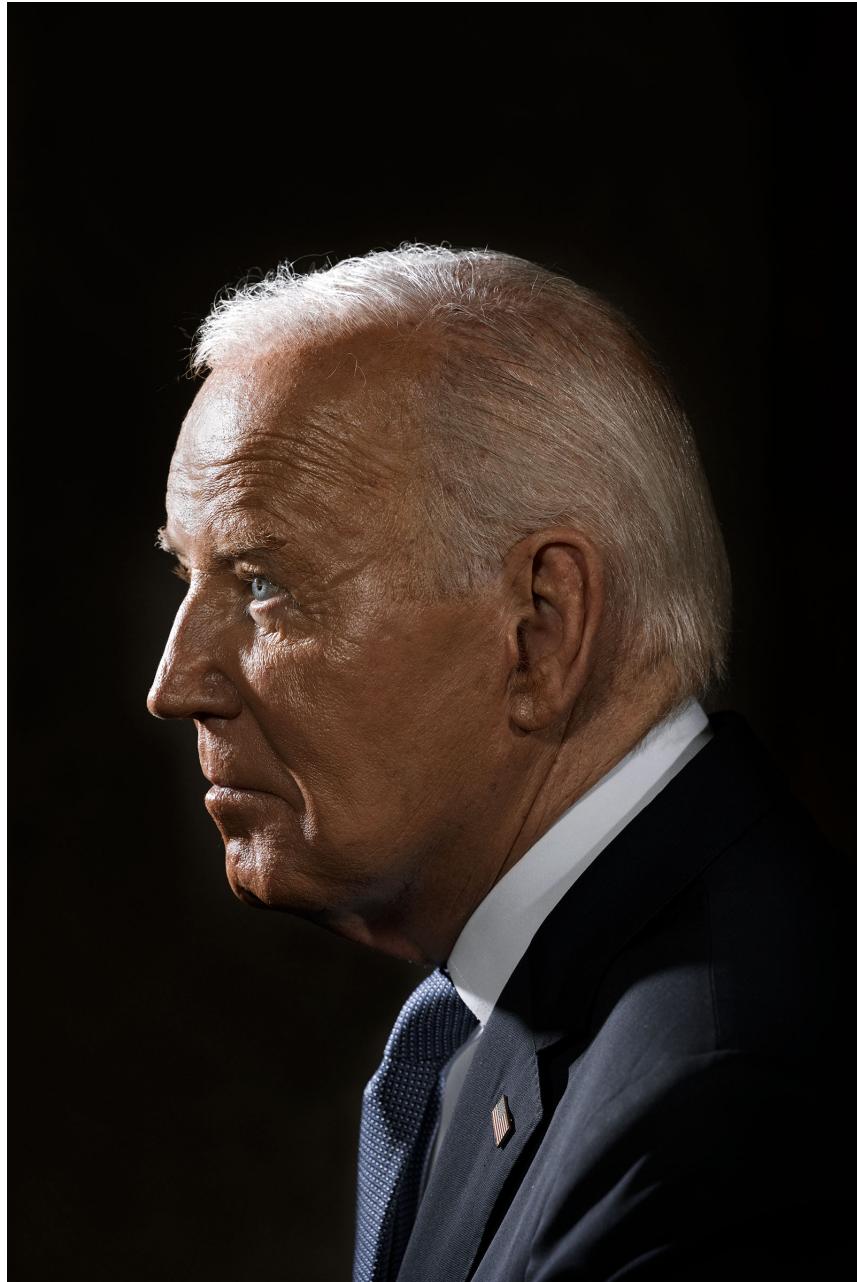
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## ‘We Are the World Power.’ How Joe Biden Leads

Massimo Calabresi is TIME's Washington bureau chief.



*You can read the transcript of the interview [here](#) and the fact-check [here](#).*

**Joe Biden** makes his way through the West Wing telling stories. In the Cabinet Room, with sun pouring through French doors from the

Rose Garden outside, he remembers the first time he sat around the long mahogany table, its high-backed leather chairs ordered by seniority. It was more than 50 years ago, Biden says, and [Richard Nixon](#) told National Security Adviser [Henry Kissinger](#) to brief the 30-year-old first-term Delaware Senator on the still secret timing of the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. Walking slowly through the halls, the President unspools anecdotes about heads of state: Vladimir Putin, [Xi Jinping](#), Emmanuel Macron. In the Oval Office, he talks about his childhood home in Scranton, Pa., and the 2008 phone call from Barack Obama asking Biden to be his running mate.

Biden recounts these memories over the course of more than 90 minutes on a warm spring day, speaking in a quiet, sometimes scattershot way. The impression he gives is one of advancing age and broad experience, of a man who has lived history. Biden leads the U.S. as the American century is fading into an uncertain future, a changing world of threats, opportunities, and power shifts. At 81, he holds fast to a vision that has reigned since World War II, in which a rich and powerful America leads an alliance of democracies to safeguard the globe from tyranny.

On June 6, Biden will travel to Normandy, France, to memorialize an event that has served for eight decades as a focal point of this vision. He will arrive as the 12th—and certainly the last—American President who was alive on that day in 1944, when 73,000 American troops led the largest amphibious invasion in human history, accelerating Nazi Germany's defeat and Europe's liberation. For generations, D-Day has been a hallowed anniversary. The President says commemorating it is as much about the future as the past. "We're playing [that role] even more," Biden says. "We are the world power."

Whether this view of America's role in the world will outlast Biden's presidency is an open question. Voters face a clear choice this November. Biden calls America's democratic values the

“grounding wire of our global power” and its alliances “our greatest asset.” His presumptive opponent, former President Donald Trump, called for withdrawing American forces in Europe and Asia and has promised, most recently in his April 12 interview with TIME, to cut loose even our closest allies if they don’t do as he tells them. By his own account, Trump sees all countries as unreliable, the relations between them transactional. That sentiment has spread throughout a Republican Party that once championed America’s values abroad. J.D. Vance, the Ohio Senator in contention to become Trump’s Vice President, tells TIME that the D-Day story has become a sepia-toned distraction. “The foreign policy establishment is obsessed with World War II historical analogies,” says Vance, “and everything is some fairy tale they tell themselves from the 1930s and 1940s.”

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During his 40 months in office, events have tested Biden's vision of American world leadership. Alliances haven't been enough to win a new European war in Ukraine. U.S. power and leverage haven't prevented a **humanitarian catastrophe** in the Middle East, marked by alleged war crimes. Putin is trying to assemble an axis of autocrats from Tehran to Beijing. In China, the U.S. faces an adversary potentially its equal in economic and military power that is intent on tearing down the American global order. President Xi has told his military to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027, U.S. officials say, raising the possibility of a dark analogue to Normandy

in Asia. Biden doesn't rule out sending troops to defend Taiwan if China attacked, saying, "It would depend on the circumstances."

Biden's record in facing these tests is more than just nostalgic talk. He has added two powerful European militaries to NATO, and will soon announce the doubling of the number of countries in the Atlantic alliance that are paying more than the target 2% of their GDP toward defense, the White House says. His Administration has worked to prevent the war in Gaza from igniting a broader regional conflict. He brokered the first trilateral summit with long-distrustful regional partners South Korea and Japan, and coaxed the Philippines to move away from Beijing's orbit and provide the U.S. new access to four military bases. He has rallied European and Asian countries to curtail China's economic sway. "We have put together the strongest alliance in the history of the world," Biden says, so that "we are able to move in a way that recognizes how much the world has changed and still lead."

But American Presidents must earn a mandate from their fellow citizens, and it's far from clear that Biden can. In surveys, large majorities say that he is too old to lead. As he walked TIME through the West Wing and sat for a 35-minute interview on May 28, the President, with his stiff gait, muffled voice, and fitful syntax, cut a striking contrast with the intense, loquacious figure who served as Senator and Vice President. Biden bristles at the suggestion that he is aging out of his job. Asked whether he could handle its rigors though the end of a second term, when he will be 86, he shot back, "I can do it better than anybody you know." Age aside, Biden's handling of foreign affairs gets poor marks from voters, and not just for the bungled withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan or the ongoing war in Gaza. While 65% of Americans still believe that the U.S. should take a leading or major role in the world, that number is down 14 points from 2003 and is at its lowest level since Gallup began polling the issue two years earlier.

Biden, who is the most experienced foreign policy President in a generation, believes that role is in America's interest. "When we strengthen our alliances, we amplify our power as well as our ability to disrupt threats before they can reach our shores," he said soon after taking office. To judge the merit of Biden's plan to sustain American world leadership, voters can look to his record: what he has accomplished, where he has fallen short, and how he intends to build on his work in a second term.



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**Around 3 p.m.** on Dec. 13, 2021, the White House Situation Room put through a call from Biden to his Finnish counterpart, Sauli Niinisto. Putin's [invasion of Ukraine](#) was still more than two months away, and Finland, with its 830-mile border with Russia and tense history with Moscow, had long declined to join NATO. Less than a quarter of Finns supported entering the alliance at the time. But Biden had decided, aides say, that if Russia invaded, the West's response should be not just to defend NATO, but to strengthen it.

On March 4, days after the invasion, Biden met with the newly enthusiastic Niinisto in the Oval Office. Together they called Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, who had resisted joining the alliance, to try to persuade her. After both countries applied for membership in May 2022, Biden turned to getting the

rest of NATO to accept them. In June, he called Turkey's leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan from Air Force One on the way to a summit in Madrid, in hopes of getting Erdogan's support for expanding the alliance. Dangling a one-on-one meeting, Biden said of Turkey's long-sought access to America's F-16 fighter jets, "Let's find a way to get that done," according to the White House. By March 2024, Sweden and Finland were in. "Everybody thought, including you guys, thought I was crazy," Biden says. "Guess what? I did it."

The accession of Finland and Sweden was part of Biden's broader efforts to respond to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by rallying the free world. Starting in October 2021, Biden held a [series of meetings](#) with European and NATO leaders, discussing postinvasion support for Ukraine, including military assistance, sanctions, diplomacy, and economic support. Biden also brought Asian allies into the effort. South Korea and Japan have imposed sanctions on Russia and its arms suppliers. The result, Biden advisers say, is a strengthened alliance of shared democratic values worldwide. "He has connected Europe and Asia in a way no previous President has," says National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan.



Others view all the investment in Ukraine as a distraction from the bigger challenge America faces in East Asia. "Who doesn't think that \$200 billion spent in Europe would've been incredibly useful

in the Pacific?” says Elbridge Colby, a former Trump Administration Pentagon official and lead architect of the 2018 National Defense Strategy. “Great nations fail,” says Lieut. General Keith Kellogg, Trump’s former National Security Adviser, when “you fix somebody else’s potholes instead of fixing your potholes.”

Biden says he remains committed to Ukrainian victory. Asked about the war’s endgame, Biden says, “Peace looks like making sure Russia never, never, never, never occupies Ukraine.” But last year’s Ukrainian counteroffensive was a failure. Russia recently has made its largest advances since the opening months of the invasion. Alliance building may have reached its limit, along with Americans’ appetite for funding a war of attrition. Biden’s allies in Kyiv complain he has been too cautious, giving Ukraine enough weapons to survive the war but not to win it. “It’s not a decisive stance,” says a senior official in President Volodymyr Zelensky’s government. “It’s not the way to victory.”

On balance, however, even longtime critics are impressed with Biden’s efforts in Ukraine. Former Defense Secretary and CIA director Robert Gates wrote in 2014 that Biden had “been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national-security issue over the past four decades.” But on May 19, Gates said that Biden’s response to Russia’s invasion has gone a long way toward repairing the damage of the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal. “He gained a lot of credibility with the speed with which he assembled the coalition of partner countries, allies, and friends before, during, and after the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” Gates told CBS’s *Face the Nation*.

Biden says his response has been part of a broader deterrence strategy. “If we ever let Ukraine go down, mark my words, you’ll see Poland go, and you’ll see all those nations along the actual border of Russia [fall],” he tells TIME. But in other theaters, the

high-minded Normandy vision has given way to a different kind of diplomacy.

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**Halfway through our interview**, Biden responds to a question about America’s relationship with [Saudi Arabia](#) by saying that the U.S. has two kinds of alliances: “There are values-based, and there are practical-based.” During the campaign, Biden had sworn to make Saudi Arabia a “pariah.” One of his first moves in office was to cut off certain arms supplies over the kingdom’s war in Yemen, which has displaced 4.5 million people and killed 377,000, including 11,000 children, according to the U.N. Soon after, the de facto Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, met with China’s Foreign Minister and proposed greater cooperation on nuclear energy and security with Beijing, already the kingdom’s largest economic partner.

The Biden Administration quietly pivoted. A new “great game” was afoot, with the world dividing between competing Chinese and American spheres of influence. For all Biden’s efforts to stimulate a green transition, Saudi Arabia was still providing much of the world’s energy. Moreover, the Saudis had expressed willingness during the Trump presidency to normalize relations with Israel, which would tilt the regional balance of power against Iran and in the U.S.’s favor. On Sept. 27, 2021, Sullivan traveled to Saudi Arabia with instructions from Biden to explore the possibility of a peace deal between the kingdom and Israel.

[video id=Brah1IND autostart="viewable"]

Biden himself traveled to Saudi Arabia in July 2022, bucking a flurry of criticism for meeting with MBS, who has led a widespread crackdown on clerics, academics, and human-rights advocates critical of his regime, according to Human Rights Watch, and who the U.S. says ordered the murder of *Washington Post* journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#). But the visit helped stabilize relations.

Over the course of the next year, it began to look as if Biden's moral climb down with MBS had brought the Saudis back on the U.S. side, and restarted a possible bargain with Israel. The outlines of that deal, Biden now says, were "overwhelmingly in our interest."

Hamas, the terrorist group that controls Gaza, was determined not to allow it. Days after its Oct. 7 attack against Israel, which killed some 1,200 people, Hamas spokesman Ghazi Hamad told TIME, "We planned for this because Israel thinks it can make peace with anyone, it can make normalization with any country, it can oppress the Palestinians, so we decided to shock the Israelis in order to wake up others." Eight Americans were among the estimated 240 taken hostage in the massacre. The Biden Administration has sought to secure their release, but it is not clear how many of the American hostages have survived; three reportedly have been killed. "We believe there are those that are still alive," Biden tells TIME. "I met with all the families. But we don't have final proof on exactly who's alive."



Biden's reaction to Oct. 7 was to provide rock-solid support to Israel. Within a week he had deployed two aircraft carriers to the region. Quietly, he tried to rally Egypt and Saudi Arabia to resist expansion of the conflict into a war between Israel and Iran.

Biden’s “practical-based” alliance building appeared to pay off on April 13, when Iran responded to an Israeli attack on a satellite diplomatic office by launching more than 300 missiles and drones in its first-ever direct attack on Israel. The Saudis and Jordanians reportedly provided intelligence assistance and opened their airspace to U.S. and other jets. With Israel leading the way, the ad hoc alliance managed to shoot down all but four of the projectiles, with no fatalities. More important, the episode helped avert a region-wide war.

But Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has upped the cost of Biden’s commitment to Israel at every turn. Nearly eight months after the conflict started, the death toll in Gaza, according to the local Hamas-led Ministry of Health, has climbed to more than 36,000 people, including an unknown number of Hamas fighters. More than 1.7 million have been displaced by Israeli attacks that have destroyed much of the enclave. On May 20, the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court requested a war-crimes indictment for Netanyahu, his Defense Minister, and three leaders of Hamas. Four days later, in a largely symbolic move, the International Court of Justice ordered Israel to [halt operations in Gaza](#). Human Rights Watch says Israel has “imposed collective punishments on the civilian population, deprived the civilian population of objects indispensable to its survival, and used starvation of civilians as a weapon of war.”

Asked if Israeli forces have committed war crimes in Gaza, Biden says, “It’s uncertain.” From the start, the Administration knew Israel was pushing the limits of legal warfare, the *Washington Post* and others have reported. The conflict is driving a wedge between the U.S. and its allies. On May 31, Biden laid out a phased cease-fire plan that would end the war and secure the release of hostages. He has continued to pursue the complicated regional deal with Saudi Arabia. Some close to Biden say the only holdout to the broader pact is Netanyahu. The President declines to say as much,

but when asked by TIME if Netanyahu is prolonging the war for his own political reasons, Biden admits, “There is every reason for people to draw that conclusion.”

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**As aides try** to bring the interview to a close, Biden turns to China. Hawks say Beijing is in a sprint to match American economic and military production. By some measures, it is catching up on GDP and defense manufacturing, and already has a larger navy. But Biden takes a bullish view of the competition with the rising Asian power. “Everybody talks about how, how strong China is and how powerful they are,” Biden says. “You’ve got an economy that’s on the brink there. The idea that their economy is booming, give me a break.” That doesn’t mean they can’t pose a threat. Asked if China is using AI or other means to meddle in the upcoming U.S. election, Biden says someone is, but declines to say who. Pressed, he adds, “I think China would have an interest in meddling.”

What Biden describes as China’s economic weakness could make confrontation more, not less, likely—another argument, as he sees it, for expanding America’s alliances in East Asia. And in that arena, the President has pursued a mix of “values-based” and “practical” approaches.



Biden was on Air Force One on his way to a fundraiser in Illinois on May 11, 2022, when the results of the Philippine presidential elections were announced, showing that Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. had won. Biden “had the instinct to just pick up the phone and said, ‘Hey, let’s get together soon and start building a relationship,’” Sullivan says. It was a long shot. Marcos has a pending \$2 billion judgment against him in a U.S. court relating to his parents’ human-rights record during their more than 20-year dictatorship, which ended in 1986. The Philippines are now rated “partly free” by Freedom House, and the outgoing President, Rodrigo Duterte, had courted China even as Beijing claimed nearby islands and territorial waters. Marcos had sent cold signals to the U.S. during his campaign.

Biden’s call was the first Marcos had received from a foreign leader. As U.S. officials followed up, they briefed the new President on the parallels between Putin’s invasion of Ukraine and Xi’s declared goals in the South China Sea. Biden dispatched Vice President Kamala Harris and his Secretaries of State and Defense to woo Marcos. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman made clear Marcos had diplomatic immunity and would be welcome in the U.S. Less than a year after Biden’s congratulatory call, Marcos made a visit to the White House. More significantly, he provided the U.S. military new access to four bases in the Philippines. In April and May, the two countries engaged in their largest military exercises together, simulating an effort to repulse an amphibious landing. “The President got engaged early in a very personal way,” says Sullivan, “and then kind of showed both respect for him and a vision for where the relationship would go.”

Biden has pursued this brand of personal realpolitik across Asia. He elevated the communist autocracy in Vietnam to the highest diplomatic status, comprehensive strategic partner, and has moved to embrace the increasingly repressive regime of Narendra Modi in India. He has tried to boost the “Quad” alliance with India, Japan,

and Australia, upgrading it from a meeting of Foreign Ministers to one of heads of state. In April 2023, Biden convened a Camp David summit with the South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Overcoming long-fraught relations between Seoul and Tokyo, the three countries criticized China's behavior in the South China Sea and declared "a hinge point of history, when geopolitical competition, the climate crisis, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and nuclear provocations test us."

Critics say the problem is too much friend making and not enough deterrence. The U.K. recently said China may be preparing to provide lethal aid to Russia, a move that Biden said in March 2022 would put Xi "in significant jeopardy" of harsh U.S. sanctions. "The single biggest problem with the Biden team is their failure to grasp what it takes to achieve effective deterrence against aggressors," says Matt Pottinger, who was Deputy National Security Adviser under Trump. "They failed against the Taliban, then Putin, and then Iran and its proxies. And now Beijing is making moves that could prove fateful for the world." Former Trump official Colby says Biden's diplomatic work is a weak substitute for the one thing that can deter China's rise. "These high-profile photo ops," says Colby, "are not a substitute for raw military power." He points to recent statements by senior U.S. military officials that China is outpacing the U.S. on missile- and shipbuilding, and war games showing the U.S. losing badly in a contest over Taiwan, and says the U.S. should put all its efforts into defending the "first island chain" of Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

Biden believes that withdrawing from Europe and the Middle East to focus on East Asia would backfire, aides say. If America abandons its allies elsewhere, they argue, its Asian allies will abandon it, in turn. The U.S. needs European and Middle Eastern countries to increase its economic and military advantages over

China. And ultimately, failing to confront instability now—in Ukraine, Gaza or elsewhere—will only make doing so later a more costly distraction from the competition with Beijing.

Back in the Cabinet Room after the interview, the sun is lower, and Biden has more stories. He turns to a sideboard with a commendation from the Kosovo government to his son Beau Biden, who died of cancer nine years ago. The President relates with evident pride his son’s work supporting its judicial system. A mention of diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who brokered the Dayton accords for the Balkans, elicits a story about Afghanistan and an argument Biden had with Holbrooke over the search for peace there.

On a matching sideboard on the other side of the door, the President opens an album with travel pictures, launching a series of anecdotes about the Popes he has known, including John Paul II and Benedict, whom Biden calls “the Rottweiler.” Recounting an exchange with one over abortion, he casts an eye toward the cracked door to the Oval Office and asks an aide, “Are they in there?” Turning back to his visitors, he says, “Let me show you one more picture.”

This avuncular politicking remains a Biden trademark, one that has helped with allies overseas but failed to unite Americans at home, as Biden pledged when running for President. Not that he has stopped trying. Biden ultimately persuaded Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson to move a roughly \$95 billion supplemental aid package for Ukraine, the Middle East, and Taiwan. To build support for his Middle East peace package, he has worked both sides of the aisle. On Nov. 8, 2023, Biden sat for two hours in the windowless Roosevelt Room with a bipartisan group of nine Senators who had just returned from the region, asking for impressions from the trip and moderating a conversation between them, Sullivan, and Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk. At the end, he pulled Democratic Senator Chris Coons and Republican

Senator Lindsey Graham into the Oval Office for separate 10-minute conversations about next steps in the effort, says Coons.



Biden may be right that despite the partisanship, a consensus exists for a values-based, pragmatic role for America in the world. His challenge is to get Americans to focus on that rather than on other issues driven by foreign affairs, like inflation or immigration. Biden denies that his expansion of Trump's trade war with China will increase prices, and says his only regret about lifting Trump's anti-immigration measures is that he didn't do it sooner. His goal in a second term, he says, is "to finish what he started."

At stake is the direction of the world for the coming century. At Normandy, Biden will make the case for what historian Hal Brands says is "the 80-year tradition of internationalism that has been quite good for America and the world." The alternative, says Brands, would be a "more vicious and chaotic" world where Americans ultimately would be less safe, prosperous, and free, but only after everyone else suffered first.

Wrapping up his conversation with TIME, Biden offers cookies from a tray in the outer Oval. "They're homemade," he says. Turning to leave, he offers a final salutation: "Keep the faith." But then he pauses and turns back, as the phrase triggers one last story.

It's about a relative who had his own response to that admonition. And here Biden taps one of his visitors on the chest and says, "Spread the faith."

—With reporting by Simon Shuster/Kyiv; Leslie Dickstein, Simmone Shah, and Julia Zorthian/New York; and Melissa August, Brian Bennett, Vera Bergengruen, Eric Cortellessa, and Sam Jacobs/Washington

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**Correction appended, June 5:** *The original version of this story misstated the terms of an agreement the Biden Administration struck with the Philippines. The Philippines provided the U.S. new access to four existing military bases, not permission for four new bases.*

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## Taiwan's New President Lai Ching-te Is Standing His Ground

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



As political transitions go, the ascent of [Lai Ching-te](#) to the presidency of Taiwan had pretty much everything. On May 15, the outgoing President signed off amid a riot of yellow spandex and feather boas as Nymphia Wind, winner of the latest season of [RuPaul's Drag Race](#), led drag queens through the Presidential Office Building. Two days later, a real riot erupted in Taiwan's legislature as lawmakers traded insults and punches over a bill that would heighten scrutiny powers over the government, and tens of thousands protested in the street. When Lai, who also goes by the anglicized name William, finally took office, on May 20, his inauguration speech so riled Beijing that it dispatched fighter jets and warships in “[punishment](#)” exercises designed to demonstrate its ability to “seize power.”

“So it has been a very smooth transition,” Lai tells TIME, with a straight face, in [his first interview as President](#). “So far so good.”

A stoic embrace of peril and pandemonium is perhaps essential for the leader of a vibrant, febrile democracy—not least one perched beside an authoritarian superpower determined to bring it to heel. Taiwan became politically self-ruling in 1949 at the end of China’s civil war. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has never controlled the island of 23 million, which still officially uses the archaic title Republic of China (ROC). But Chinese President Xi Jinping considers it a renegade province whose “reunification” is a “historical inevitability” and has repeatedly threatened force to achieve it.

**Read More:** [\*China’s ‘Punishment’ Military Drills Concern Even Taiwan’s Beijing-Friendly Party\*](#)

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) sent 1,709 warplanes through Taiwan’s air-defense identification zone last year. For Lai’s saying in his address that the governments of Beijing and Taipei “are not subordinate to each other,” the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) launched “Joint Sword-2024A” drills that saw at least 35 aircraft cross an unofficial median line in the Taiwan Strait that until recently Beijing had largely respected.

“China’s ambition to annex Taiwan is part of their national policy,” Lai says. To achieve it, Beijing has set about diplomatically [isolating Taiwan](#), which is barred from the U.N. or World Health Organization, and is officially recognized by just 12 governments; tiny Nauru peeled off 48 hours after Lai’s January election victory—an unprecedented third straight for the China-skeptic Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). “If our diplomatic allies decide to switch allegiance and choose the PRC, we wish them well,” Lai says, magnanimously.

Official recognition, after all, is not all the world sees. Lai's inauguration was attended by 51 international delegations, including the U.S., U.K., Australia, Japan, and Canada. Not long after, the U.S. Congress sent a bipartisan delegation. Speaking to TIME, House Foreign Relations chair Ben Cardin called Taiwan "a beacon of democracy and good governance," which is "confronting an existential threat from one of the world's most authoritarian countries. This threat directly impacts the security of the United States and our allies."

Taiwan has little choice but to strengthen bonds with the only democracy capable of facing down Beijing. It's a key reason Lai tapped Hsiao Bi-khim, Taipei's de facto ambassador in Washington, to serve as Vice President. A self-professed "Jersey girl," Hsiao attended high school in America, and her mother's family can be traced back to the Mayflower. "There is no scenario in which Taiwan defends itself without the United States," says Oriana Skylar Mastro, author of *Upstart: How China Became a Great Power*.



**Read More:** [Here's How China Has Responded to Countries Congratulating Taiwan's Election Winner](#)

But the stronger the ties between Taipei and Washington, the more pressure Beijing puts on the island, and the greater the danger of finally exploding a Cold War conflict that has smoldered for 75 years. And as November's U.S. election approaches, candidates of all stripes will vie to appear tough on China, and the potential return of the famously transactional Donald Trump portends another wobble of uncertainty for Taiwan's tightrope. "One of William Lai's biggest problems is going to be America," says Kerry Brown, director of the Lau China Institute at London's King's College. "Enough politicians want to play around with Taiwan to get back at China. The era in which America was a predictable partner is over."

Hsiao is keen to paint a different picture, saying she has "worked delicately and diligently to make sure that Taiwan ... doesn't become an issue of political competition, that both [American] parties can share ownership in a sign of unity and support." What isn't up for debate are the stakes: Taiwan produces 90% of the world's most advanced semiconductors, and the global cost of a war over the island could reach \$10 trillion, estimates Bloomberg Economics. That's some 10% of global GDP, far more than the shock from the war in Ukraine or the COVID-19 pandemic.

The job of staving off such a catastrophe falls to a 64-year-old bubble-tea fanatic sporting '90s throwback hair and loathed by Beijing as a "dangerous separatist." And that's fine by Lai. "I invite President Xi," he says, "to jointly shoulder with us the responsibility of maintaining peace and stability, building regional prosperity, and advancing world peace."

Lai grew up poor in a tumbledown, two-story house in the coal-mining hamlet of Wanli set amid mist-swathed hills north of Taipei. He was still a baby when a work accident claimed the life of his father, leaving his mother to raise six children alone. He walked an hour each way to elementary school in a childhood punctuated by

the sight of sobbing widows clutching funereal white cloths by collapsed mine shafts.

The deprivations of Wanli gave Lai a determination and awareness of social injustice that propelled him first to medical school, then to work as a kidney doctor in the southern city of Tainan. “When I was little, I hoped to become a doctor so as to take care of the sick, relieve suffering, and save lives,” he says. “But during the process of Taiwan’s democratization, many young people devoted themselves to politics, including myself.”

**Read More:** *How China Could Play a Key Role in the Israel-Hamas War—and Why It’s Not*

Lin Chun-hsien, a lawmaker representing Tainan, first met Lai when they were both junior campaigners for the DPP. Although nobody doubted Lai’s intelligence and social conscience, there was an obstacle. “When people encouraged William to step into politics,” Lin laughs, “he said he had to get permission from his mother.” She valued the security of a medical career. “My mother told me, ‘If people support you, then you should run for election; if not, then you should continue as a doctor,’” Lai recalls with a smile. “In other words, my mother felt that I probably would not pursue politics for very long!”

JUNE 24, 2024



After four terms in the national legislature, Lai ran for mayor of Tainan. “Our campaign meetings would end at 10 p.m.,” Lin recalls. “Afterwards William would go straight into policy meetings, which would only be wrapping up when I returned early the next morning.”

In seven years in office, Lai eschewed populist policies in favor of tough choices. A project to ease gridlocked traffic involved relocating more than 300 homes. The mayor went door-to-door to persuade residents to vacate and was frequently chased away. But his most transformative achievement was persuading TSMC to establish a \$40 billion foundry in Tainan, where today the semi-

conductor colossus produces its most advanced 3nm chips for firms such as Apple and Qualcomm.

The project helped entrench Taiwan both in global supply chains and in today's simmering tech competition between the U.S. and China. The U.S. CHIPS and Science Act includes \$39 billion in subsidies to bring chip manufacturing back to the U.S., including \$6.6 billion for new Arizona operations of TSMC, whose key clients such as Nvidia and AMD are barred by U.S. export controls from selling their most advanced chips to Chinese firms. "In this era of smart technologies, semiconductors have become crucial," says Lai.

[video id=tOwGcNBn autostart="viewable"]

### **Read More:** *Taiwan's Election Isn't a Disaster for Xi Jinping—Unless He Makes It One*

The world's reliance on Taiwan's semiconductor industry has been dubbed a "silicon shield" that renders the price of any conflict too high for China, the world's No. 2 economy and largest trading nation. If U.S. efforts to stymie China's access to [cutting-edge chips](#) risks weakening that shield, President [Joe Biden](#) has offered a genuine one, dispatching billions of dollars in high-tech weaponry, and in a recent interview with TIME he didn't rule out using U.S. military force to defend the island. Clearly, the delicate status quo over Taiwan is shifting. "We have to be careful not to suggest U.S. policy is to keep Taiwan out of the hands of the [PRC](#) no matter what, even if it's done peacefully," cautions Mastro. "That could turn a war of choice into a war of necessity for China."

The risk is that with Taiwanese identity at a historic high, and U.S. backing for the island never stronger, Beijing may feel compelled to act. It shows evidence of preparing to. In the past three years, the PLA has added over 400 advanced fighter aircraft and more than 20 major warships, while more than doubling its ballistic and cruise-

missile inventory. Former U.S. Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral Phil Davidson testified to Congress in 2021 that China wanted the capability to seize Taiwan within six years—a timeline that has since been backed by other U.S. military figures and, if true, would fall within Lai’s first term.

Lai, once again, projects calm. While admitting “geopolitical changes will continue to impact the dispersion of semiconductor companies,” he “does not believe that this will increase the risk of conflict.”

Kinmen is a rocky island that lies just three miles off the coast of mainland China yet remains administered from Taipei. When the Nationalist forces of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek first fled to Taiwan, Kinmen was fiercely defended as a vital staging post for eventually reclaiming China. Deep tunnels were hewed from its rock and defensive ramparts erected on its powder white beaches.

Kinmen was also where U.S. support for Taiwan first became explicit. When in 1954 Mao Zedong unleashed an artillery blitzkrieg on it, President Eisenhower felt obliged to set aside reservations about Chiang’s authoritarian project and signed a mutual defense treaty between the U.S. and the ROC. Even after President Nixon switched official recognition to Beijing in 1979, Congress demonstrated its steadfast support for Taipei with the Taiwan Relations Act, which obligates the U.S. to sell the island weapons for its own defense.



Ever since, Kinmen has been a [barometer of cross-Straits relations](#). In times of high tension, shells fly and residents hunker in fortified foxholes. And when relations eventually warmed, Kinmen was at the heart of the rapprochement; direct people-to-people, trade, and postal connections opened between Kinmen and the neighboring Chinese city of Xiamen in the early 2000s. But by early 2020, China's strict [zero-COVID measures](#) had severed the links, and political tensions have prevented their full restoration. A nadir was reached in February after a fatal boat collision claimed the lives of two Chinese nationals off Kinmen, prompting Beijing to reject a tacitly respected prohibited-waters line. Deteriorating relations are difficult for locals reliant on cross-border trade. "Lai Ching-te is dangerous," says elderly resident Xu Fei, shucking oysters outside her swallowtail-eaved shophouse in Kinmen. "Xi Jinping is China's new emperor, and we have to live with him."

China's recent economic woes—rising youth unemployment, a stock market in free fall, and [spiraling debt](#)—could provide a new opportunity. (China accounted for 83.8% of Taiwan's foreign investment in 2010; last year, it was only 11.4%.) Both of Taiwan's main opposition parties advocate restarting negotiations on a Cross-Straits Service Trade Agreement, which stood to boost economic integration between China and Taiwan but stalled after being targeted by student-led protests in 2014.

Lai is fine with the status quo, arguing that “the time for this has long passed” and citing “substantive differences opening up between Taiwan’s economy and China’s present economic structure.” So determined is the DPP to sideline China that after an earthquake hit the Taiwanese city of Hualien on April 3 and the PRC offered to donate 100 prefabricated homes to victims, the offer was rebuffed. It was “not what the people affected by the Hualien earthquake required at the time,” Lai says.

**Read More:** *‘The Best Way to Preserve Peace Is to Be Able to Fight a War’: Taiwan’s Foreign Minister on Resisting Chinese Aggression*

Lai also demurs on the blandly named 1992 Consensus, a political fudge agreed to by Beijing and a former Nationalist (KMT) government in Taipei stating that both sides concur they belong to the same nation, even if they bicker over which is the legitimate government. But Lai’s DPP does not recognize the Consensus, and a September poll suggests 76.7% of respondents see themselves as Taiwanese, rather than Chinese or some mix. “The 1992 Consensus is a fairy tale,” says Brown. “But people need fairy tales, and without it there’s no common framework to talk and make sure neither side does something dumb.”

Lai disagrees, insisting that any interactions should be “mutually beneficial and reciprocal,” with tourists and students flowing in both directions or not at all. Moreover, he adds, “the PRC should recognize that the Republic of China exists.”

That plain speaking goes a long way toward explaining why Lai is singularly despised in Beijing. He has been to the PRC only once, in 2014, on a cultural exchange as mayor. It wasn’t a success. Speaking with faculty and students at Shanghai’s Fudan University, Lai was asked if the DPP would amend its [goal of independence](#) to mend ties with China. Instead of dodging the question, Lai candidly replied that a desire for independence was a consensus

among Taiwan's people. In 2017, Lai went further, describing himself as a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence"—a phrase that has dogged him ever since despite repeated efforts to walk it back.

The bar is higher for Lai than for any other recent Taiwan leader. He correctly points out his "not subordinate" statement had been uttered by both outgoing President Tsai Ing-wen and her KMT predecessor Ma Ying-jeou, but not at their inaugurations. "We were surprised that President Lai would bluntly spell out that the sovereignty across the Taiwan Strait is not overlapping," says Alexander Huang, director of international affairs for the KMT. "He did not give any room for the flexibility or constructive ambiguity that have existed for 20 years."

Lai tells TIME, "What I said was the truth. According to international law, we are already a sovereign and independent country. My goal is to bring the people of Taiwan together."

Yet [divisions](#) are what have defined Lai's first few weeks in office. Crucially, in the same election that lifted Lai to the presidency, the DPP lost control of the legislature to the KMT and the similarly China-friendly Taiwan's Peoples Party. And indeed the legislature provided Lai his first major test. On May 28, it passed an amendment that obligates military, government, and even private citizens to answer questions and provide any information requested by lawmakers, among other enhanced scrutiny powers. Opponents see China's fingerprints on the measure, pointing out that 17 KMT lawmakers traveled to Beijing in late April and met with CCP No. 4 and chief ideologue Wang Huning.

"The [CCP] has now infiltrated our Congress," says Robert Tsao, a billionaire former semiconductor mogul who has donated \$100 million to efforts to curb [Beijing's influence in Taiwan](#). "It's so obvious." Asked whether he agrees, Lai offers a measured reply: "Political parties should put national interests above their own."

As the bill was being passed, tens of thousands gathered outside the legislature, brandishing placards saying democracy is dying and welcome to xi jinping's evil empire. Inside, DPP lawmakers waved lights, shouting, "Brush your teeth, your breath stinks" at their KMT peers, who clutched sun-shaped balloons and chanted, "Let sunlight into the legislature." Huang of the KMT denies that the CCP lies behind the amendment, whose intention is simply "to rebalance executive and legislative checks and balances," he says. "It's not closed-door or unjustified in terms of procedure."

The bill stands to slow Lai's ambitious domestic agenda, which includes raising the minimum wage, building a Taiwanese space industry, and enhancing social welfare. "The task before Lai is to stay the course without getting frustrated," says Chong Ja Ian, an expert on Taiwan politics at the National University of Singapore. "Because if he makes a mistake, not only will his domestic opponents seize on it, but the PRC will as well."

Living precariously is as much a part of Taiwan's identity as colorful protest, bubble tea, and drag queens in the corridors of power. And today more than ever, the job of preserving the freest place in the Chinese-speaking world involves choices that ripple across the globe. "My responsibility," says Lai, "is to deepen Taiwan's democracy and enable hard-working people from all walks of life to realize their ideals and contribute to our country."

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## How Trump's Life Will Change Now That He's a Convicted Felon

Nik Popli is a reporter at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau. He covers economic policy and national politics, focusing on Congress, technology, and the economy.



Donald Trump is the first ex-President to be convicted of crimes, and now he'll be the first who has to negotiate the reality of being a felon in the U.S.

The guilty verdict will likely result in new restrictions on Trump's rights and privileges, potentially impacting his ability to vote, own firearms, and travel to other countries.

**Read More:** [\*Donald Trump Convicted in Historic New York Hush-Money Trial\*](#)

"This is long from over," Trump declared on May 30 moments after a Manhattan jury convicted him on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a sex scandal.

Trump hasn't yet [been sentenced](#), and he has vowed to appeal the verdict. Here's how his life will change now that he's been convicted.

## Travel restrictions

As a convicted felon, Trump's passport will not automatically be seized by the U.S. government. But he could find it more difficult to travel to some countries.

[Thirty-seven nations](#)—including Canada and Mexico—bar individuals with criminal records from entering their borders. Here is a map of all of the countries Trump may be unable to visit:

The travel restrictions would potentially complicate Trump's presidency [if he were to win another term](#) in office. Some governments could choose to waive the travel ban if Trump requested permission to make a visit, but it's currently unclear which countries would be willing to do so.

Former President George W. Bush ran into a similar issue during his time in office when he had to apply for a special waiver to enter Canada on an official state visit because he had pleaded guilty decades earlier to a drunk driving charge. However, that was a misdemeanor charge that was never tried in a court of law, while Trump was convicted by a jury on felony charges. Next year's G7 summit of world leaders is set to take place in Canada.

## Voting rights

Convicted felons do not automatically lose their right to vote in the U.S.; different states have different policies on the issue. But Trump would be unable to cast a vote for himself if he's incarcerated at the time of the November election.

That's because in Florida, where Trump lives and has voted since 2020, a felon's eligibility to vote depends on the laws of the state where the conviction occurred—in this instance, New York, which only revokes a felon's voting rights while they are incarcerated. Judge Juan Merchan will decide whether Trump will serve prison time on July 11.

*[Buy TIME's Donald Trump verdict cover here](#)*

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican who challenged Trump for the party's 2024 nomination, has vowed to make sure Trump can vote in his home state: "Given the absurd nature of the New York prosecution of Trump, this would be an easy case to qualify for restoration of rights per the Florida Clemency Board, which I chair," he [said on X](#).

## Gun ownership

New York state and federal law prohibits individuals convicted of a felony from possessing firearms, meaning Trump has to turn over all of his firearms to authorities or legally pass them off to another person ahead of his sentencing on July 11.

It's unclear if Trump currently owns any guns. In a 2012 [interview](#), he said that he had a concealed-carry permit in New York for two firearms: a Heckler & Koch HK45 and a .38-caliber Smith & Wesson. In a 2016 [interview](#), he said, "I always carry a weapon on me."

Trump could try to get his gun rights restored by petitioning a state judge in New York, where he was convicted. The U.S. Supreme Court could also weigh in: a case challenging the federal gun prohibition for convicted felons has been [appealed](#) to the nation's highest court, but the Justices have not yet said whether they will hear the challenge.

## Probation officer meetings

While Trump remains free on his own recognizance, he will soon be interviewed by a probation officer or psychologist for a pre-sentence report that Merchan will use to help decide his punishment.

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During the interview, Trump can “try to make a good impression and explain why he or she deserves a lighter punishment,” according to the New York State Unified Court System.

The report may also include interviews with Trump’s family and friends, as well as others involved in the case. It may also include Trump’s personal history, criminal record, and recommendations for sentencing.

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## How Trump Prepared GOP Allies for a Guilty Verdict

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



The Trump campaign was prepared. Minutes after a Manhattan jury convicted the former President on felony charges of falsifying business records, fundraising pitches inundated mailboxes; right-wing influencers stormed social media with aggrieved tirades; and Donald Trump emerged from the courtroom to delegitimize the verdict. “This was a disgrace,” he told reporters. “This was a rigged trial by a conflicted judge who was corrupt.”

That much was expected. But the onslaught of attacks against the ruling extended beyond the mass of MAGA loyalists. Many of Trump’s GOP critics assailed the trial rather than the first U.S. President to be found guilty of a crime. “The political underpinnings of this case blur the lines between the judicial system and the electoral system,” [said](#) Sen. Susan Collins. The prosecution was “politically motivated,” [argued](#) Sen. John Thune.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Trump World villain, was equally [dismissive](#): “These charges should have never been brought in the first place.”

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It was a strikingly cohesive message from virtually all corners of the conservative firmament, even among those who don’t subscribe to the America First doctrine. This didn’t happen by accident. It was part of a deliberate strategy by Trump to impose the same talking points throughout the party: that Trump’s felony conviction was nothing more than a Democratic hit job.

“Donald Trump has thoroughly taken over the Republican Party,” says Whit Ayres, a veteran GOP strategist, “the Republican Party is going to react in defense of Donald Trump on anything he says or does.”

While some in Trump’s orbit held out hope for a hung jury, people close to him say he was expecting a guilty charge. “He absolutely anticipated it,” says Rep. Cory Mills, one of the first congressional allies to join Trump in court. “He saw the writing on the wall.” Now the Trump campaign is corralling the entire GOP apparatus around a crusade that has the effect of undermining faith in the rule of law.

Trump’s tight grip over the GOP only made that easier. As the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, he’s currently leading in most polls over President Joe Biden, including in most of the battleground states. Few within his party want to get crosswise with Trump, who has a history of humiliating heretics. On Tuesday, Trump [endorsed](#) state Sen. John McGuire’s primary challenge against Rep. Bob Good, the Virginia congressman who endorsed Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. The week before, Good trekked with Trump to court for a display of obeisance.

The verdict produced fresh signs that GOP dissension could pose politically existential risks. After former Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, who's running for a Senate seat in a liberal state, [told voters](#) to "respect the verdict," one of Trump's senior advisers sent a message. "You just ended your campaign," [wrote](#) Chris LaCivita on X.

Trump has already capitalized on his felony conviction. His campaign says it [raised](#) a stunning \$34.8 million in less than 12 hours. In comparison, Trump raised roughly \$4 million after his mug shot was released last August. Brandishing the haul as a sign of grassroots support, Trump's camp says that roughly 30% of the contributions came from small-dollar donors new to the WinRed online platform. The figures will not be verifiable until the campaign's next filing with the Federal Election Commission.

Part of their success stemmed from the coordinated, multi-pronged effort by prominent Republican officials to discredit Trump's legal woes. "I'm not surprised that there was a lot of cohesive messaging," says Alex Bruesewitz, a Trump-allied GOP operative. "This trial has been in the public spotlight for six weeks. They've had a year to prepare for that conviction statement."

On Thursday, a jury of five women and seven men found Trump guilty on 34 charges of falsifying business records to conceal hush money payments to a porn star ahead of the 2016 election. The trial centered on whether Trump ordered his former lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen to pay Stormy Daniels \$130,000 and then lie on official documents to cover up a campaign finance violation.

[\*Order your copy of the Trump verdict issue here\*](#)

Despite the jury's unanimous verdict, Trump's closest allies took aim at the judge and the prosecutor. On Fox News, Speaker Mike Johnson [characterized](#) the case as driven by "old charges" and a "tainted judge." He referred to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin

Bragg, who brought the case, as “an open Biden supporter” and a “political activist.” To even some Republicans, the volume and intensity of right-wing rhetoric undercutting the judicial system was alarming. “Just like undermining faith in the outcome of our elections is worrisome for anybody who cares about democracy,” says Ayres.

Those broadsides are not likely to abate. Judge Juan Merchan scheduled Trump’s sentencing hearing for July 11, just days before this summer’s Republican National Convention. Trump has vowed to appeal the ruling, which can stretch far beyond November, but the campaign is shifting from the courtroom to the campaign, where they will test whether American voters want to elevate for the first time a convicted criminal to the nation’s highest office.

“The President is going to allow his defense attorneys to continue to do what they need to do,” says Mills. “But now it’s his time to get back on the trail.”

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## Now that He's Convicted, Trump's Future Is in Judge Merchan's Hands

Brian Bennett is the senior White House correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C. bureau. He has covered wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, interviewed world leaders, traveled across the globe with President Trump and President Biden, and written extensively about intelligence, immigration and the fallout of major disasters.



Now that a jury has found Donald Trump [guilty](#) of 34 felony charges, nearly everything about what happens next is up to [Judge Juan Merchan](#).

The experienced New York Supreme Court judge who has presided over Trump's Manhattan trial has several thorny decisions before him including whether he should send a former President to jail or probation, and if any sentence should be postponed until after Trump has exhausted his appeals. Every decision will reverberate across the political landscape and, depending on the timing, could greatly affect the election in November.

That's a lot of power vested in one person. Here's a look at the decisions that Merchan faces involving Trump's future now that he's convicted.

## **Revisiting Trump's bail conditions**

The first decisions came almost immediately after jurors notified the judge they had found Trump guilty. After that, the jury's duties were complete and Judge Merchan dismissed them. It is up to the individual jurors to decide if they want to talk to reporters or the legal teams after the case about why they voted the way they did.

Immediately after the guilty verdict came in, prosecutors had an opportunity to ask the judge to increase Trump's bail, a common request that is meant to act as a guarantee that a newly convicted defendant will return to court for the sentencing hearing and any other court requirements related to the case. In some trials, prosecutors argue that a defendant who has been found guilty presents an increased risk of fleeing and would ask the judge for stricter bail terms, including being remanded to jail until the formal sentencing hearing. Trump had posted a \$175 million bond in the Manhattan fraud case. Merchan asked the prosecutor about the status of Trump's bail. The prosecutor said, "no bail." Trump was released on his own recognizance until sentencing.

## **Trump's sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 11**

Even scheduling Trump's sentencing hearing was politically fraught, given this year's election calendar. Judge Merchan set Trump's sentencing hearing for July 11. That means Trump will have to be back in the Manhattan courtroom days before the Republican National Convention kicks off on July 15 in Milwaukee.

In the weeks leading up to the sentencing hearing, if standard procedures are followed, Trump will meet with a probation officer who will interview Trump and prepare a written report with a recommended sentence. The probation report will then be sent to the defense attorneys, the prosecution and the judge. And Trump's legal team will have a chance to suggest sentencing terms and supply letters of support for Trump.

But the actual sentence is up to Judge Merchan to decide, and he will have a range of options before him. He could decide not to punish Trump at all by awarding him time served—essentially deciding that going through the trial was punishment enough, and that there was no further need for penalties. He could give Trump a “conditional discharge” with a requirement like community service. Or he could put Trump on probation with terms that he had to abide by in order to avoid jail time. Or Merchan could decide to send Trump to prison.

“There is a huge delta politically between a jail sentence and a sentence of probation. That’s going to be the most agonizing choice the judge will face,” says Norman Eisen, a senior fellow in governance studies at The Brookings Institution and former counsel to the Democrat-led House Judiciary Committee during Trump’s first impeachment.

For each of the 34 felony charges Trump is facing, the New York State sentencing guidelines call for 16 months to 4 years in prison. It is unlikely that a judge in Merchan’s position would decide those sentences should be served one after the other. If the judge considered all 34 counts to be part of a single action, he could rule that the prison time be overlapping, which would mean a maximum sentence of 4 years in prison.

Should Merchan believe a prison sentence is warranted, he also has leeway to sentence Trump to a much shorter time behind bars. The

New York penal code allows judges to consider prison terms of one year or less for first-time fraud offenders.

In New York, a prison term of less than a year is usually served in the city prison on Rikers Island or in the Manhattan Detention Complex, commonly known as “The Tombs.” Prisoners with sentences longer than a year are usually sent to one of the New York state prisons.

## **Trump could appeal both his conviction and the judge's sentence**

Trump’s lawyers are certain to appeal his conviction, a process that would likely stretch past Election Day. His first stop would be the Appellate Division in Manhattan. He could ultimately seek a review from New York’s highest court, the Court of Appeals in Albany.

In the meantime, Merchan can issue his sentence. But that decision would also not necessarily be absolute. Even if Merchan decided to sentence Trump to prison, the former President would likely be permitted to stay out of jail, pending his likely appeals.

Immediately following a potential sentencing hearing, Trump’s legal team would be able to march over to the Manhattan Appellate Courthouse at 25th Street and Madison Ave. to appeal the sentencing. “Most white collar cases get bail pending appeal. That’s just a fact,” says Diana Florence, a former long-time prosecutor in the Manhattan district attorney’s office.

## **Merchan previously showed a reluctance to send Trump to jail**

Judge Merchan has already shown that he doesn’t take lightly the idea of sending to jail a former President who is a leading candidate for the job again.

Merchan found Trump in contempt of court 10 times for violating his gag order by publicly criticizing witnesses, and fined him \$1,000 for each violation. In court in early May, Merchan said that the fines clearly weren't enough of a deterrent, and he would consider putting Trump behind bars, if prosecutors recommended it. Merchan acknowledged that the politics of such a decision were impossible to ignore.

"Mr. Trump, it's important to understand that the last thing I want to do is to put you in jail. You are the former president of the United States and possibly the next president, as well," Merchan told Trump. Merchan said he considered incarcerating Trump "truly a last resort" and that he worried about the people who would have to enforce his orders, including the court officers, the corrections officers and Trump's Secret Service detail. "I worry about them and about what would go into executing such a sanction," Merchan said.

But Merchan made clear he was willing to jail Trump if he felt it was needed to defend the judicial system and compel Trump's respect for the process. "Your continued violations of this court's lawful order threaten to interfere with the administration of justice in constant attacks which constitute a direct attack on the rule of law. I cannot allow that to continue," Merchan said. "So, as much as I do not want to impose a jail sanction, and I have done everything I can to avoid doing so, I want you to understand that I will, if necessary and appropriate."

Now that the jury has convicted Trump, Merchan finds himself facing that same decision again.

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## 5 Surprising Takeaways From India's Election Results

Astha Rajvanshi is a staff writer at TIME based in the London bureau. She covers international news and affairs with an eye on India and neighboring countries. She received the Matthew Power Literary Reporting Award and a Fellowship from the Institute of Current World Affairs.



After six long weeks of voting in the grueling heat, India's election delivered stunning results.

With all of the 640 million [votes](#) now counted, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is poised to preside over a rare, third consecutive term in power—making him only the second Indian prime minister to do so after Congress leader Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962. With all its allies, Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also managed to secure a majority of 283 seats in the Lok Sabha, the 543-seat lower house of India's Parliament. Under India's electoral system, the party or alliance that wins more than 272 seats can form a government.

Yet, the results have shocked most pollsters and Modi supporters—and indeed, the country. That's because the BJP won only 240 seats this election, effectively losing the single-party majority Modi has enjoyed since he was first elected in 2014.

“Modi will have to act in a more consultative, deliberative, and inclusive manner,” says Milan Vaishnav, director of the South Asia Program at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. “This is anathema to the PM who, going back to his days as Gujarat chief minister, has never had to truly worry about coalition politics.”

As the election draws to a close, it has brought with it a series of waves that will reshape India’s political landscape for the next five years and beyond. But ask any Indian about the election outcome and they’ll tell you that the country’s democracy is so vibrant that it never fails to surprise. “Nobody knows anything about India. This is one thing one should know about India,” one observer even [posted](#) on X.

Here are some of the most surprising takeaways from India’s 2024 election.

## Busting Modi’s “400 paar” promise

This election, Modi and the BJP ran on an ambitious slogan: “Ab ki baar, 400 paar.” That meant that the ruling party was aiming to win more than 400 seats with its NDA alliance—which ultimately backfired as the BJP did not even win a simple majority on its own, a stark departure from the party’s thumping victory in 2019 when it won an unprecedented 303 seats. The result also means an unprecedented electoral stall for Modi, who in his 23 years in politics as the chief minister of the state of Gujarat from 2002 and then as India’s prime minister from 2014, has fallen way short of a majority despite appearing as the central face of the BJP’s campaign. (In the BJP’s 48-page manifesto, Modi’s name is featured 67 times.)

## **BJP loses stronghold in Uttar Pradesh**

Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, holds significant sway in Indian elections with 80 parliamentary seats. In 2014 and 2019, the BJP won 71 and 62 seats respectively that helped fuel the party's rise to power in Delhi. But 2024 looks very different. The BJP won just 33 seats, while its allies secured three seats. Most notably, it lost in the Faizabad constituency, where Modi inaugurated the [Ram temple in Ayodhya](#) earlier this year, seen as a centerpiece of the BJP's campaign.

## **BJP wins a seat in Kerala for the first time**

The [southern state](#) of Kerala has long been seen as a bastion of the left, but the BJP finally made inroads after Suresh Gopi won by a margin of 74,686 votes in the Thrissur constituency and became the BJP's first Lok Sabha parliamentarian from Kerala. Experts say this might reflect Islamophobic elements among the Christian communities in Kerala, where Hindus make up 55% of the state's population, while Muslims and Christians make up 27% and 18% respectively.

## **Women voters prefer Modi**

Indian women have become a formidable force in India's voter turnout [due to](#) political knowledge, literacy, and media exposure. Traditionally, female voters were more inclined to vote for Congress, but in the last few elections, they have redirected their votes to the BJP. A pre-poll survey [predicted](#) that 46% of India's 472 million women voters would opt for the BJP-led alliance in the election. The reason: Modi's welfare schemes, which have focused on women's welfare—including cash handouts and domestic benefits like free cooking gas, piped water, and sanitation.

# A Sikh separatist and Kashmir leader is elected from jail

Amritpal Singh, a 31-year-old Sikh separatist leader who was arrested last year after a month-long police manhunt in the state of Punjab, was elected a lawmaker after defeating 26 other candidates. Singh rose to prominence calling for a separate Sikh homeland known as Khalistan. Sheikh Abdul Rashid, another jailed leader from Indian-administered Kashmir in the disputed Himalayan region, won a seat by more than 200,000 votes. The former state legislator was arrested by the Modi government on charges of “terror funding” and money laundering in 2019.

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## The Meaning of Mexico's First Female President

Viri Rios is a Mexican scholar and public policy expert. She holds a Ph.D. in government from Harvard University.



Being a woman in Mexico is tough—if not dangerous. Women [earn 16% less](#) than men, and the gender gap in labor force participation is one of the highest in Latin America. But perhaps the most shocking statistic is that every hour, at least one woman [disappears](#), and every day, 11 women die [violently](#).

Few would imagine that this same country has just elected a female President. Claudia Sheinbaum, former mayor of Mexico City and loyal successor to the left-wing incumbent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), has come out on top following the [June 2 vote](#).

The question is how in the world this happened. In a country where [90%](#) of Mexicans harbor negative biases against women, and 58% hold such biases specifically against female politicians, tens of millions have voted for women. That includes not just Sheinbaum but [Xóchitl Gálvez](#), a senator and businesswoman, who the opposition rallied behind.

This is no small puzzle. Mexico's negative biases against female leaders nearly double those of the U.S. or Canada. Yet, Mexico has become the first North American nation to elect a female leader. The results are still streaming in, but Mexico is also expected to boast the fourth largest contingent of congresswomen in the world and to have women governing nearly half of its 32 states.

The empowerment of women in Mexican politics did not occur haphazardly. It stemmed from a deliberate, albeit gradual, construction of a legal framework fostering gender parity—most notably through mandatory gender quotas. It all started in 1996 when a law recommending that at least 30% of candidates should be female was passed. In 2002, a congress that was 84% male made it mandatory, but with the big exception that voters could elect men in primaries. “That was what took us to court to demand that the exception be eliminated,” Silvia Hernández, the only Mexican female that has been senator for three terms, told me about the lawsuit Mexican women launched in response. Many more women accompanied the process. In 2011, the court ruled in their favor.

Things moved fast from then. Mexico went from having 26% congresswomen in 2011, to 42% in 2015, and 48% just ahead of the Sunday vote. And that is not all. The expected success of women at the governor-level is no doubt helped by Mexican electoral authorities mandating that more than half of each party's gubernatorial candidates be female, and that they not be fielded in areas where their party is expected to fare poorly.

Yet voters wonder whether a President Sheinbaum will make things better for Mexican women. There is some hope. She has outlined a bold vision for creating a “national care system” to establish nurseries, nursing homes, and sick care facilities to alleviate the burden of unpaid care work, which is primarily carried out by women.

Still, recent history has demonstrated that female leadership does not always translate into better policies for women. According to [my own research](#), Mexico's women legislators consistently support federal budgets that underfund the amount of money allocated to gender equality programs.

Sheinbaum's rise to power excites many women who will identify with a female leader. Yet AMLO [did not](#) have a good relationship with the feminist organizations that criticized him. The fear is that Sheinbaum doesn't have it either.



Concerns also linger over how Mexican voters might respond to a President Sheinbaum, especially when she inevitably makes errors, as all politicians do. Studies [indicate](#) that female leaders often endure harsher backlash than their male counterparts, a phenomenon exacerbated in Mexico by prevailing societal sexism. Being a female President won't be easy. A [survey](#) by Enkoll in February found that a third of Mexicans feel "the country is not prepared" for one, and 14% openly say they would prefer a man in the job.

That sexism has and will come from women. During the campaign, opposition parties astutely dog whistled at latent Mexican sexism. In the first presidential debate, Gálvez nicknamed Sheinbaum "the

ice lady,” casting her as cold and heartless—a direct affront to societal expectations that women be warm and nurturing. In another debate, Sheinbaum was criticized by Galvez on her choice of attire, implying that her “lack of religiosity” rendered her unfit for office. A famous female Mexican intellectual, Guadalupe Loaeza, also criticized her curly hair ahead of the vote, arguing it was evidence that Sheinbaum was “an envious little girl.”

Outside of politics, Sheinbaum will have to contend with pundits who have frequently called her AMLO’s “clon,” “protégé,” “favorite subordinate,” “spoiled girl,” or “little flower.” These critics assume that she is being manipulated or controlled by AMLO, rather than, what is more probably happening, which is that Sheinbaum is part of a political movement that is [broadly popular](#) and whose policies have been successful in attracting voters. It is only strategic to continue advancing this popular program.

She is also frequently accused of being arrogant due to her disciplined and sober personality, as well as her ability to dodge difficult questions from the press. “I have no doubt that in a male politician, these traits would likely be hailed as signs of professionalism and power,” Marta Lamas, a recognized feminist and professor from Mexico’s National Autonomous University, told me. In Sheinbaum’s case, they morph into liabilities, inviting accusations of haughtiness and conceit.

Sheinbaum is a capable politician in her own right. She [won Morena’s primary](#) against four men and had previously won two elections. As mayor of Mexico City, she demonstrated the ability to distance herself from AMLO in areas that she deemed relevant. Unlike him, she [wore a mask](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic, spearheaded major clean energy projects, and avoided the militarization of state police.

Polls ahead of the vote [showed](#) that Sheinbaum's campaign was supported by more women than men. But in a country where being a woman is so difficult, support will only last if she delivers as President. The feminist struggle to put women in power does not end with Sheinbaum's victory. The most important challenge is translating gender equality into reality. Success won't come easily.

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## This Psychologist Just Won \$1.3 Million for Her Work on Trauma and Repair

Belinda Luscombe is an editor at large at TIME, where she has covered a wide swath of topics, but specializes in interviews, profiles, and essays. In 2010, she won the Council on Contemporary Families Media Award for her stories on the ways marriage is changing. She is also author of *Marriageology: the Art and Science of Staying Together*.



Every year since 1972, the [Templeton Foundation](#) has given a Nobel Prize-sized amount of money to a researcher who is exploring in a rigorous, scientific way “the deepest questions of the universe and humankind’s place and purpose within it.” This year the \$1.3 million prize is going to [Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela](#), a psychologist and professor at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, who looks at how people come together in the aftermath of horrific national violence, and particularly at the mechanisms of trauma and forgiveness.

Gobodo-Madikizela served on South Africa’s groundbreaking [Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#), which, after the fall of the

apartheid regime, offered citizens the opportunity to come forward and tell the stories of the injustices committed against them as well as the injustices they committed. The Commission, which was initially chaired by [Archbishop Desmond Tutu](#), was active from 1995 until 2002.

TIME spoke to Gobodo-Madikizela about her work researching the processes by which humans can end the cycle of violence and revenge that often perpetuates conflict from one generation into the next, particularly about how forgiveness, remorse, and intergenerational trauma work. This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

**Your research explores how countries can mend in the aftermath of violence, and you've coined the idea of a “reparative quest.” Can you explain what you mean by that?**

I started researching to understand how do people forgive in the context of tragedy when a loved one has been murdered or violated in very tragic ways? How does a family reach out? What are the conditions that made this possible? Most scholars have not been thinking about the possibility of forgiveness in these kinds of contexts. [The Truth and Justice Commission] was a moment that offered us an opportunity to think this through, not the philosophical, abstract theoretical phenomenon, but rather as something that's has been experienced by people who have gone through it. And I worked with perpetrators, for example, who have been remorseful, and victims who were forgiving, to understand that relationship. I came to a point where I was rethinking the language of forgiving and it brought me to this language of repair, which came closer to the idea of what to do when there are wounds that are irreparable. It captures more accurately what that process involves.

**How is it different from the process of seeking and offering forgiveness?**

It's a constant journey to repair and to heal. The wound remains, the hurt and the pain and the trauma remain. So for people who have been implicated, that's waking up every day thinking about what are the actions, what are the gestures, what are the words that might repair this history? The reparative quest, for me, comes from a way of understanding the process of reckoning with the past that is not a forgiving, because forgiving tends to suggest finality, that there's an end point—I have forgiven, I can move on—whereas the notion of the reparative quest suggests this is journeying with a trauma and journeying with someone who has wounded others, who carries shame or guilt. These are journeys of repair that involve people from both sides of this historical past.

**The world is in conflict right now. The wars in Europe, in the Middle East, and in parts of Africa are at this moment causing wounds that will echo into the future. Can any steps be taken during conflict, or do you have to wait for a while and then begin this process of repair?**

While the hostilities are going on, it's very difficult to speak about repair. People are wounding, people are being wounded, and people are being violated. There isn't a time to stop to think about what can be done. What drives people is revenge and vengeance and then you get these cycles that so often repeat themselves historically. The hope in these situations is that there will emerge a different kind of leadership, people who have that sense of moral imagination and are capable of modeling a way of stopping and thinking and reflecting on different ways of engagement so that people have a chance to think about what kind of futures they want.

**Could a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission work in the aftermath of the Ukraine and Gaza conflicts? And might it also be a good approach for the sorts of historical grievances that keep cropping up in America?**

Truth commissions are very essential, because they are about accountability. The process makes people feel that the pain and trauma they suffered over the years has been acknowledged, but also invite those who have perpetrated the pain and the trauma to take account of their own actions. If you look at the Commission in South Africa, there are certain things that could have happened that could have made the outcome better. The Truth Commission was dealing with a very important aspect of the past: the emotional life of victims and the emotional life of those perpetrators who dared to look into their conscience and admit that they crossed the line. What it did not do was to address the question of, how do you then restore the conditions of a quality of life? How do you restore what was lost for families, for example, who lost breadwinners? What was lost in terms of opportunities and privileges to go to school, to get better jobs, to be trained for jobs?

**Your book, *A Human Being Died That Night*, grew out of your conversations with Eugene de Kock, one of the worst known criminals of the apartheid era, who came forward during the Commission. He's now out of prison. Are you still in touch with him?**

Since COVID, I lost touch with him. But every now and again, there will be a telephone communication. He obviously is very isolated now. He lives under guard. He's in a protected house that is owned by the state and is not his. He's out of prison but is not a free man. He's sitting alone with his crimes because the South Africans for whom he committed the crimes are nowhere to be seen near him. There's been a sense of major distancing from him, and from his crimes, and so he finds himself very isolated. And that has made his remorse extremely, extremely challenging. And because de Kock is a very central part of my thinking and my writing and reflecting on these processes, I've also started writing about the limits of remorse. It is very clear to me the need to be held by a community of others, particularly others for whom the evil deeds

were committed. Psychologically, there is a serious disintegration of the self in the absence of that holding.

**A lot of people don't really understand generational trauma, how someone suffer the effects of a trauma that they did not endure. How would you explain it?**

When we speak about the traumas being passed on from generation to generation, it's that certain memory traces are passed on because the stories that are told become an identity of a particular group or a particular family. And when the circumstances and conditions do not change, it exacerbates the meaning of these memory traces, so that they continue to mean something. Let's look, for example, in the U.S., at the story of George Floyd. When African Americans witnessed it, it immediately evoked memories of enslavement. That doesn't mean the current generation feel enslaved, but the fact that they know that this is their history, it's an identity that is carried in the body and the indelible imprint remains, particularly if there hasn't been any process of acknowledgment, of working through this trauma. It's almost as if these generations carry on the mourning into the next generation and the next generation because the conditions that caused the mourning still remain.

**You said in an interview that you think that humans will never eradicate racism, which seems very depressing. Do you see any signs of hope?**

There is always a sense of hope, but the experiences and the challenge of racism, I do not believe will ever be eradicated. But there is hope; some of the work of the Commission is evidence that it is possible to bridge the divide. It's all the more reason why we should put greater efforts in learning from these experiences that have taught us that the possibility always remains.

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## How Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo Became America's Point Woman on AI

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



Until mid-2023, artificial intelligence was something of a niche topic in Washington, largely confined to small circles of tech-policy wonks. That all changed when, nearly two years into Gina Raimondo's tenure as Secretary of Commerce, ChatGPT's explosive popularity catapulted AI into the spotlight.

Raimondo, however, was ahead of the curve. "I make it my business to stay on top of all of this," she says during an interview in her wood-paneled office overlooking the National Mall on May 21. "None of it was shocking to me."

But in the year since, even she has been startled by the pace of progress. In February 2023, a few months after ChatGPT launched, OpenAI's leadership previewed its latest model, GPT-4, to Raimondo, who used it to write a speech she says was "alarmingly close" to her own prose. Today, tech companies continue to roll out

new products with capabilities that would have seemed like science fiction just months earlier. As AI has rocketed up the government's priority list, President Joe Biden made Raimondo point woman, charging her with controlling access to the specialized semiconductor chips required to train the most advanced AI systems and with ensuring that those systems are safe.

With her business-friendly approach, Raimondo, 53, is popular among the leaders of the very companies she's tasked with steering. "She has transformed the Commerce Department from a department that really did not focus on technology issues under President Trump to, in many ways, the very center of the federal government for a focus on next-generation technology," says Brad Smith, vice chair and president of Microsoft and one of Raimondo's many tech industry advisers.

But questions linger over whether her department—focused on promoting rather than regulating U.S. industry—is well-suited to lead the government's AI response. Many existing laws already apply to AI, with various agencies responsible for enforcement—the Federal Trade Commission, for example, has long regulated the use of AI in loan application assessments. But Biden's Executive Order in October 2023 made Commerce the de facto authority on the general-purpose AI systems like those powering ChatGPT. Congress has not addressed the new technology, leaving Raimondo to rely on voluntary cooperation. Her department is also chronically underfunded: the U.S. AI Safety Institute's \$10 million budget, for example, is dwarfed by its British counterpart's \$127 million.

If the powerful systems that Commerce grapples with keep improving at the rate many predict, the stakes are incredibly high. AI could be decisive in the U.S.-China cold war, displace countless workers, and even pose an existential risk to humanity. Raimondo, with limited resources and legal authority, has to confront what she calls the immense opportunities and threats of AI.

“We’re gonna get it done, though it is also true: Congress needs to act, we need more money, and it’s super daunting,” she says. “We’re running as fast as we can.”

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Navigating this monumental challenge requires technological acumen, and Raimondo’s background has prepared her well. She spent most of her pre-politics career in venture capital. “I was, once upon a time, a tech investor,” she says. “It comes naturally to me.”

Even after pivoting into politics, serving first as Rhode Island’s general treasurer and then as a two-term governor, Raimondo continued to follow technology. Entrepreneur [Reid Hoffman](#) hosted a dinner in 2016 for a group of Bay Area intellectuals and Raimondo, who was touring Silicon Valley at the time. “A lot of people from around the world come to Silicon Valley to try to understand what they can learn to improve their region,” says Hoffman. “The funny thing is, very few U.S. politicians do that. Gina is one of those few.”

Raimondo still speaks with executives like Hoffman, as well as advocates, academics, and venture capitalists. “I try so hard to talk to as many people in the industry as possible,” she says, confirming regular contact with CEOs from Anthropic, OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, and Amazon. Her closeness with the tech industry has drawn criticism, with Senator Elizabeth Warren [accusing](#) Commerce of “lobbying on behalf of Big Tech companies overseas.”

That perhaps makes sense, since the department’s [mission](#) is to be a pro-business voice within the government, aiming to “to create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities.” Raimondo’s prominence stems from Congress’ failure to confer legal authority elsewhere in government to regulate AI—and that job, she says, should not come to Commerce. “Commerce’s magic is that we’re not a regulator,” Raimondo says.

“So businesses talk to us freely—they think of us as a partner in some ways.”

That friendliness has proved useful in securing voluntary commitments from AI companies. Biden’s AI Executive Order requires tech companies to inform Commerce about their AI-model training and safety-testing plans, but it doesn’t mandate Commerce’s direct testing of those models. Raimondo says the AI Safety Institute will soon test all new advanced AI models before deployment, and that the leading companies have agreed to share their models. Despite [reports](#) of AI firms’ failing to honor voluntary commitments to the U.K. institute, Raimondo remains confident. “We have had no pushback, and that’s why I work so closely with these companies,” she says. As for relationships with individual CEOs, Raimondo emphasizes there’s no preferential treatment. “I’m pretty clear-eyed. Every business person I talk to has an angle—they want to make as much money as they can and maximize shareholder profit. My job is to serve the American people.”

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Raimondo leads Commerce’s efforts to maintain U.S. technological supremacy by controlling the supply of specialized semiconductor chips needed for advanced AI. This includes overseeing the distribution of \$39 billion in CHIPS Act grants to semiconductor companies and imposing export restrictions on chips and chip-manufacturing equipment. Commerce is also developing safety tests and standards for powerful AI systems in coordination with international partners. While some of these activities could have been housed elsewhere in government, Alondra Nelson, a social science professor at the Institute for Advanced Study and former White House adviser, sees Raimondo’s competence as a key factor. “It is a manifestation of the President’s confidence in her leadership that she has been tasked with taking the baton on these historic initiatives,” she says.



By leveraging policy tools and the dominance of American AI companies, Raimondo hopes to make access to cutting-edge AI contingent on adherence to U.S.-led safety standards. She played a crucial role in brokering a deal between Microsoft and UAE-based G42 in which the latter agreed to remove Chinese technology from its operations. “What we have said to [the UAE], and any country for that matter, is you guys gotta pick,” Raimondo says. “These are the best-in-class standards for how AI is used in our ecosystem. If you want to follow those rules, we want you with us.”

She also believes U.S. leadership on AI can help promote more responsible practices in countries like the UAE. “We have something the world wants,” she says. “To the extent that we can use that to bring other countries to us and away from China, and away from human-rights abuses with the use of technology, that’s a good thing.”

The push to set global AI standards is rooted in an understanding that many of the challenges posed by AI transcend borders. Concerns about the dangers of highly advanced AI, including the possibility of human extinction, have gradually gained traction in tech circles. In May 2023, executives at prominent tech companies and many world-leading researchers signed a [statement](#) reading: “Mitigating the risk of extinction from AI should be a global

priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war.”

These fears have spread to Washington in recent months, becoming part of serious policy discussions. In a December 2023 Senate forum on “Risk, Alignment, & Guarding Against Doomsday Scenarios,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer [asked](#) each attendee to state their p(doom)—the probability they assign to AI causing human extinction, or some equally catastrophic outcome. (Raimondo declines to give a specific estimate. “I’m just a very practical person, so I wouldn’t think of that,” she says, but notes AI-enabled bioterrorism is a primary concern.)

While some in Washington take doomsday scenarios seriously, others remain skeptical. In April, Raimondo appointed Paul Christiano, a researcher with a track record of grave predictions about AI apocalypse, as head of AI safety at the U.S. AI Safety Institute. Some employees at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which houses the Safety Institute, were [reportedly](#) unhappy with the appointment, but Raimondo sees value in the disagreement. “The fact that Paul’s view is different than some [NIST employees] is a really good thing,” she says. “He can push, they push back.”

Limited resources may partly explain the internal NIST conflict. The \$10 million for the Safety Institute was pulled from NIST’s budget, which shrank in 2024 despite the agency’s being drastically underresourced, with many of its campuses [falling into disrepair](#). Biden’s AI Executive Order “puts a tremendous burden on Commerce to do a lot of the implementation,” says Dewey Murdick, executive director at Georgetown’s Center for Security and Emerging Technology. “I don’t think the funding is anywhere connected with what is realistic.”

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Shortly after our interview, Raimondo sits motionless, eyes lowered, listening intently to a briefing from Seoul, where AI Safety Institute director Elizabeth Kelly is representing the U.S. It's good news: the other nations present seem eager to participate in a U.S.-led plan to establish a global network of AI-safety institutes. Raimondo grins at the three officials around the table. "This is kind of like how it's supposed to work," she says. But as she and her team talk next steps, the grin fades. It's mid-May and there's a lot to do before the group of AI-safety institutes convene in San Francisco in October, she says.

The November election quickly follows. If Trump wins, which she says would be "tragic on every level, including for AI policy," Raimondo rules out a move into the tech industry. If Biden is re-elected, Raimondo says she'll stay at Commerce "if he wants me to."

Either way, the quest for U.S. chip superiority has bipartisan support, and will likely endure. However, NIST may struggle to maintain its apolitical reputation if AI remains a hot-button issue in Washington. "Now, too much money is being made, too much impact on real life is happening," Murdick says. That means AI is inevitably going to become more political.

Politics will of course feature in the potential passage of any AI legislation, which Raimondo says she plans to shepherd on the Hill as she did the CHIPS Act. For now, absent a regulator that such legislation would empower, Commerce's AI duties continue to expand. While Raimondo's CHIPS Act investments have [unleashed](#) a surge of private funding, analysts are less optimistic about Commerce's ability to choke off China's access to chips. And insufficient funding could cause the AI Safety Institute to fall short. In practice, this could mean China rapidly closes the AI gap on the U.S. as it secures needed chips, with neither side able to guarantee well-behaved systems—the doomsday race scenario feared by those who believe AI might cause human extinction.

But Raimondo remains confident. “There has been moment after moment after moment in United States history, when [we are] confronted with moonshot moments and huge challenges,” she says. “Every time we find a way to meet the mission. We will do that again.”

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## ‘We Had to Meet.’ How Two Israeli-Palestinian Peace Groups Are Grieving Together

Eetta Prince-Gibson is the Israel editor for *Moment* magazine, the former editor in chief of the *Jerusalem Report*, and a regular contributor to *Haaretz*, *+61J*, and other international publications.



Spring and early summer are difficult times for both Israelis and Palestinians.

For Israeli Jewish citizens, the times move intensely from Passover, the holiday of freedom; to tragic Holocaust Memorial Day; to Memorial Day for Fallen Soldiers and Victims of Terror; to the triumphant celebrations of Independence Day; to the anniversary of the Six Days War. In public and private observances, the days proceed through well-set rituals, intended to give us a shared meaning as a society and to inculcate and frame Israel’s official narrative: from slavery to freedom, from victimhood to victory, from powerlessness to sovereignty.

For Palestinian citizens of Israel and those living in the Occupied Territories, the season is marked by memories of the [Naqba](#), the

Palestinian Catastrophe of the displacement of the Palestinian people during Israel's War of Independence, and the ongoing occupation and dispossession of their land and property. A set of observances and rituals marks their narrative of tragedy and victimization.

These narratives anchor us in our worlds. And like all ethnic narratives, these rituals are inherently political, intended to filter out any inconvenient truth, to bind us to loyalty to our own, and to deny the humanity of the other. With almost surgical-precision, they cauterize pain and loss into divisions between us—and them.

There are Israelis and Palestinians who reach across the divides to mourn together and declare that war between their two peoples is not the inevitable cost of securing a Jewish state or creating a Palestinian one. For 19 years, Combatants for Peace—a non-profit volunteer [organization](#) of ex-combatant Israelis and Palestinians who have rejected all forms of violence in order to end the occupation and search for peaceful, equitable solutions to the conflict, in conjunction with the Parents' Circle—Families Forum, [which](#) brings together Palestinian and Israeli families whose loved ones have been killed in the conflict, have organized a joint memorial ceremony on the day, according to the Hebrew calendar, that Israel observes National Memorial Day.

We had to meet.

*Rana Salman, Palestinian director of Combatants for Peace*

The first joint memorial ceremony was attended by less than 100 people and held at a private venue. Last year, more than 15,000 attended the ceremony, which was held in a public park, and many hundreds more were turned away for lack of space.

As the number of attendees has increased, so, too, have the public objections and attempts to derail the ceremony, from both sides.

Last year, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, like many of his predecessors, [refused to allow](#) Palestinians from the West Bank, who are banned from entering Israel without special permits, to attend the ceremony. In response to petitions filed by the sponsors, the Supreme Court [decided](#) unanimously that Palestinians be allowed into the country, subject to security checks. In the Israeli media, pundits accused participants of treason to their people, and hecklers have tried to disrupt the events. Palestinian participants have been denounced in the Arabic press and some participants have been physically threatened.

Yet the ceremonies have proceeded as scheduled, including both Palestinian and Israeli speakers and performers.

But this year is different, says Rana Salman, 39, who is the Palestinian director of Combatants for Peace. A resident of Bethlehem, in the occupied West Bank, Salman says that for the first few months following the outbreak of the war, the coordinators could not even meet in person— partly because of Israeli military restrictions and partly because of their own feelings. Yet none of the members of the group, Palestinians and Israelis alike, considered cancelling the ceremony, she insisted.

“The events of October 7th and the new Naqba and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza forced us to think how we could come together as a joint community and bring our message of shared humanity and hope for a political solution for both our societies,” Salman explains.

“Everything is so raw and painful. Israelis and Palestinians are [traumatized](#) and enraged. So many of us don’t even know if our loved ones are alive, or dying, or dead. But we knew that we had to meet, because otherwise, we would have no hope for a better future. We have to show both our societies that if we, people who fought each other in the past, can come together, then people who

are fighting each other now can come together, too.”

The date of the event was also complicated, she noted. Usually, Memorial Day is in April and the Naqba Commemoration, which some Israeli Jews also choose to attend, is in May, so the two events are separate. This year, because of the Hebrew calendar, the dates were close. “But this also forced us to realize how truly connected the two events really are, because they both focus on pain, loss, and injustice,” she said.

Salman said that she is aware that some Palestinians and Palestinian-supporters, especially protestors abroad, may condemn the ceremony as what they refer to as a “normalization” of the occupation. “What we are doing is actually co-resisting both the occupation and the violence on all sides,” she insisted. “Both nations are totally in trauma now. I think that just the fact that our movements exist, despite everything, provides some hope.”

Avner Wishnitzer, a leader of Combatants for Peace who served in the Israeli military in an elite reconnaissance unit and is now a lecturer in history at Tel Aviv University, said, “I feel such sorrow —I feel it in my whole body, sorry for us all.” He quoted cited a verse by Israeli national poet laureate Haim Nachman Bialik, “’In their death, they willed us life.’ But for us to fulfill that, both sides must recognize that in order for us to live, we must all take responsibility to put an end to all this death.”

In fact, Wishnitzer acknowledged organizers were concerned, about security in such fraught times and about the safety of a large congregation of people, as Hamas from the Gaza and Hezbollah from Lebanon continue to fire missiles into Israel. They also doubted that even the Supreme Court would grant permits for Palestinians to come into Israel.

We are all here because we recognize that all of us  
are both victims and perpetrators.

*Avner Wishnitzer, a leader of Combatants for Peace*

So this year, Combatants for Peace and the Parents' Circle decided to do things differently. The ceremony was held at an undisclosed location, limited to tape the ceremony for 250 invited invitation-only participants, and recorded. Viewing groups in Israel, the West Bank, and throughout the world were encouraged to watch on Memorial Day. Eszter Korani, Israeli director of Combatants for Peace estimates that over 4,000 people watched the ceremony as it was streamed on Facebook, and an additional 40,000 have watched since on YouTube and Facebook.

In Beit Jalla, a suburb of Bethlehem, some 70 people, mostly Palestinians, watched the recording in the Palestinian offices of Combatants for Peace. The offices, with signs in Hebrew and Arabic, are located in a residential neighborhood high on a hill and provide a panoramic view of Jerusalem – only just over five miles away yet unreachable for the Palestinians due to the military restrictions.

Milling about, munching on cake and fruit, the atmosphere was friendly and easy until the viewing began, and the mood turned somber and sad. The program was seamlessly balanced between Israeli Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic speakers, with subtitles in both languages, plus English, on the screen. There were bereaved parents and former combatants from both sides, videos of children voicing their fears and hopes, and musical performances.

Ahmed Alhilo, a member of the Palestinian Authority's planning office in Jericho and Palestinian member of Combatants for Peace, who lost 60 members of his extended family members in Gaza, spoke on a tape. He struggled to maintain his composure, his voice

breaking several times as he described the killing of his family members who had been sheltering at the [Al-Shifa Hospital](#) when the Israeli army attacked.

“The Israeli army is still killing shamelessly. Everyone in Gaza is a terrorist in their eyes,” he said. “I personally understand the great fear and hurt that struck Israelis after the events of Oct. 7. But does killing tens of thousands of people, causing hunger, fear, terror and indescribable pain, promise security and peace for Israelis?”

Many in the crowd also teared up as Michal Halev spoke of her son Leor Abramov, who was murdered at the Nova music festival on October 7th. “In the few times that I am able to raise my head above my private pain at the loss of my most beloved son, from the endless void that was once my heart, I find only one goal to live for —to search for what I can do to help our wounded humanity to heal, so that no more mothers will be broken by the killing, the loss, the violence and the war.”

Jonathan Zeigen told of the murder of his mother, longtime peace activist, Vivian Silver. [Silver](#) had initially been presumed to have been taken hostage, but her charred remains were identified by forensic archeologists two months later. Some of the participants had known Silver through their shared peace activities. The crowd turned reverently silent when Zeigen said, “I am heartbroken as I look at my children and think that their father may also never have the opportunity to see peace.” There was a murmur of quiet agreement when Zeigen concluded that “the joint ceremony is the only appropriate way to honor his mother’s life’s work.”

After the screening, the audience dispersed somberly. As she left, Mai Shaheen, a Palestinian member of Combatants for Peace from the West Bank city of Jenin, and a therapist and practitioner of non-violent resistance and communication, was still wiping her tears. “I am a mother, and I listened to the Israeli mother talk about the

murder of her beloved son. And I think of my daughter. I think about the rapes and murders of civilians in Israel, about the genocide in Gaza, about the hostages, about the killings in my home city. And I cry. Yet being here gives hope. Being here is the most loyal action I can take as a Palestinian and a Muslim—to try to listen to the other person above the noise of the war and the hatred.”

Wishnitzer listened. “I am here as an Israeli and a Jew. But no less importantly, we are all here because we recognize that all of us are both victims and perpetrators. Death and killing are not a *force majeure*. They are decisions we make, and therefore we can also make decisions not to kill and be killed.”

He acknowledged that groups like Combatants for Peace and the Parents’ Circle are a minority in both societies even before Oct. 7., but said, “Both nations are totally in trauma now. I think that just the fact that our movements exist, despite everything, provides some hope.”

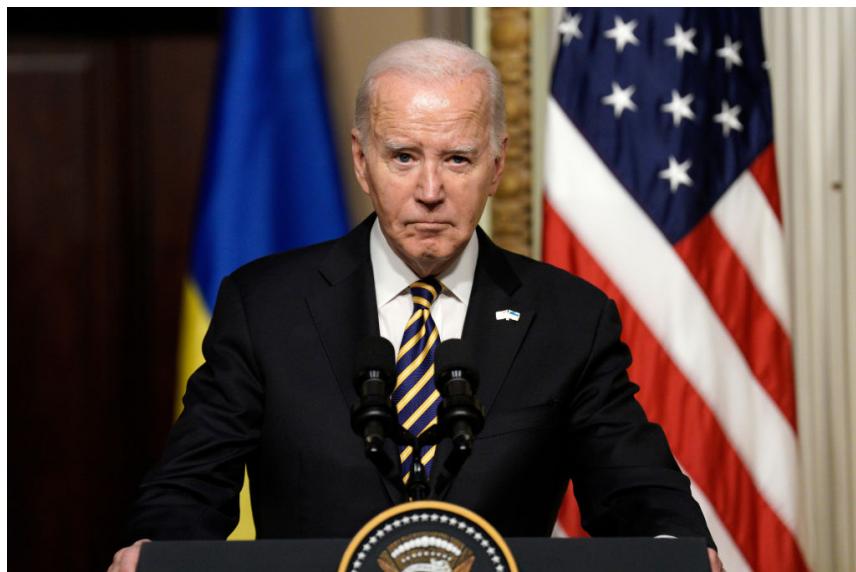
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## The Risks of Biden's New Boldness in Ukraine

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As Russia's war grinds on, the Biden Administration is now taking on bigger risks to support Ukraine. The latest example is a White House [decision to allow](#) Ukrainian forces to use U.S.-provided weapons to strike targets inside Russia. We may also soon see [NATO personnel](#) on the ground in Ukraine to train fighters.

Six months ago, Western leaders weren't ready to discuss either of these changes—at least not publicly. But recent [Russian battlefield gains](#) and a hardening of Western attitudes toward Vladimir Putin have begun to erase these red lines. After Ukraine's highly anticipated counter-offensive [fizzled late last year](#), emboldened Russian forces began advancing along the war's long frontlines and

are again threatening Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city. Because that city is less than 20 miles from the Russian border, many of the weapons used against it are fired from inside Russia. It's impossible to defend Kharkiv indefinitely without firing back on targets across the border. The fear of more Russian advances this summer has left Western leaders worried that Ukraine could lose the war if they don't take urgent and decisive action.

### **Read More:** *Ukraine Can't Win the War*

Biden has also decided that most of Vladimir Putin's threats of retaliation aren't credible. After repeatedly threatening (usually unspecified) action against NATO countries in response to various acts of perceived aggression, and even warning that Russia might use nuclear weapons, Putin has taken very few actions that would trigger a broader war. That may be in part because Washington appears to have expressed its red lines to Russia. "The Americans have told the Russians that if you explode a nuke, even if it doesn't kill anybody, we will hit all your targets [positions] in Ukraine with conventional weapons, we'll destroy all of them," said Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski in an interview last month.

[video id=ZuEJM7oe autostart="viewable"]

Biden is also taking bigger risks with Russia because he wants to avoid the perception he's doing less than America's European allies. Both French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have signaled openness to Ukrainian strikes against military targets inside Russia. Denmark has said it will supply F-16s that Ukraine can use across the border. Finally, after 27 months of war, with no genuinely dangerous escalation toward a conflict that would bring NATO and Russia nose to nose, risk tolerance is rising as the war drags on.

We can also expect news, perhaps from next month's NATO Summit in Washington, about a Western security pact with

Ukraine. While it won't be the kind of automatic mutual defense commitment that comes with NATO membership, it will likely reaffirm a long-term commitment to Ukraine and formalize a process that accelerates weapons and other aid approvals.

All that said, there is a real and increasing risk of Russian conflict with the U.S. and other NATO members. Western leaders can't expect Putin to sit still when all his bluffs are called. He's not going to launch a frontal assault on a NATO country, but the risk of increasingly aggressive and disruptive [Russian cyberattacks is rising](#), and the Kremlin can find other ways to make life more difficult in [NATO countries](#). There is also an obvious risk that Ukraine might use Western weapons for attacks that (accidentally or deliberately) hit Russian civilians. Or that Russian strikes on Ukraine kill NATO trainers. Either scenario would force further escalation.

In short: don't be fooled by the appearance of a battlefield stalemate in Ukraine. There are growing dangers than could dramatically, and suddenly, up the stakes in that conflict.

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## I Hate Summer—and You Should Too

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*.



Wake me when it's over—summer, that is. I know, I know, you just love it: the long days, the warm evenings, the trips to the beach, the afternoons at the ballpark when your favorite team is playing and the pennant race is tightening—and the temperature is skyrocketing, and your skin is blistering, and the beer is \$6, and the drive home will be in 88° heat, which is fine if you don't mind running the air conditioner, except that you're burning through \$4-a-gallon gas, because it's summer-driving season and the giant oil companies didn't get to *be* the giant oil companies without knowing the right time of year to hike their prices.

And that's hardly all of it. Summertime is the season of horribles, from higher crime rates, to increased warfare, to spikes in asthma, to raging wildfires, to swarms of bugs, to a rise in traffic accidents—and even to a bump in divorces, because how could a 100° heat

wave, a busted A.C., and the kids out of school *not* spell domestic bliss?

What's more, it's only getting worse. Last summer was the hottest on record, [according to](#) the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the [10 warmest years](#) were all from 2010 to 2022. So with a lousy part of the year becoming lousier still, here, in no particular order, are nine reasons summer is the suckiest season of them all.

## Road wrecks

There's nothing like long days, no school, and lots of teen drivers to make the highways a safe place to be. *Not.* It's no coincidence that the [Automobile Association of America \(AAA\) labels](#) the stretch between Memorial Day and Labor Day "the 100 deadliest days." There are [over 11.7 million U.S. drivers](#) between the ages of 15 and 20, and if you know what's good for you you'll stay out of their way—especially when they're out as a group, driving recreationally. "We know that when teens are joyriding as opposed to driving with a specific destination and time in mind, there is a heightened risk," said Diana Gugliotta, senior manager of public affairs for AAA Northeast, [in a statement](#) last year.

**Read More:** [\*What It's Like To Be Deathly Afraid of Feet\*](#)

AAA's numbers back that up. When a teen driver has only other teens in a vehicle, the risk of fatality for the driver and all passengers increases 51%. When at least one passenger is over 35, the overall fatality risk declines 8%. From 2011 to 2020, there were 7,316 deaths in summertime teen-related traffic accidents—nearly half the total of all teen-related traffic accidents for the year.

## This means war

Napoleon Bonaparte could tell you a thing or two about what it's like to pick a fight with Russia in the dead of winter. In 1812, the French army suffered half a million casualties in battles that climaxed in December—a rout that led to Napoleon's abdication and exile in 1815. Any general worth his steed would prefer to fight in the summer when there's plenty of light, the roads are clear, and soldiers aren't bundled up against the cold. As far back as 55 BCE, the Roman army's "campaigning season" would end when summer wound down and the soldiers would retreat to their winter quarters. It's probably not a coincidence that World War I began in August 1914, World War II on Sept. 1, 1939, and Nazi Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941. More recently, in August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, and in August 1991, the old Soviet Union nearly fell into civil war when communist hardliners tried to oust President Mikhail Gorbachev. America's 20-year war in Afghanistan typically saw its fiercest fighting in the summer months, and the same is true of the war in Ukraine.

Hot-weather warfare is likely only to get worse. A 2009 paper in *PNAS* found that rising temperatures exacerbated by climate change could lead to a 54% increase in the risk of civil war in Africa by 2030. A 2011 study in *Nature* found that warmer weather during El Niño years doubled the risk of civil war in 90 tropical countries and could have accounted for 20% of conflicts around the world over the past half century. Meantime, what's the season of peace on Earth and goodwill toward men? Wintertime, baby. Wintertime.

## Going buggy

Summer advertises itself as the season of birdsong and butterflies. Don't believe it. It's the season of pests—particularly ticks, mosquitoes, flies, fleas, bees, and wasps. Ticks, mosquitoes, and fleas in particular can spread diseases that include malaria, yellow fever, Zika, dengue, Lyme, and chikungunya. Bees, wasps, and

yellowjackets—with their infernal stings—are similarly creatures of the summer. And you think you know flies? You don't know flies. There are [110,000 species of them](#)—most more active in hot weather—making up a global population of [17 million flies](#) for every living human. *Pssst!* They've got us surrounded.

**Read More:** [\*Long Dismissed, Chronic Lyme Disease Is Finally Getting Its Moment\*](#)

## Season of wheeze

Ah, summer, it takes your breath away. Literally. More than 25 million Americans have asthma, and 4.7 million of them are children—[according to](#) the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). If that means suffering during the temperate months, it's much worse when the oven that is summer turns the dial up to broil. Heat and humidity [constrict and narrow airways](#), trap ozone, and cause the air to entrain more particulate matter from cars, trucks, and smokestacks. What's more, stagnant summer air—especially in homes with poor air conditioning or none at all—can exacerbate the presence of mold, dust, and pollen. And then—and stop me if I've mentioned this before—climate change is making things more punishing still for people with asthma. A 2023 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [report](#) found that rising temperatures could increase the incidence of childhood asthma by anywhere from 4% to 11%, due partly to worsening pollution and allergies, and the [growing problem of wildfire smoke](#).

## Speaking of wildfires...

When it comes to dust, haze, and a mustard-colored sky, Mars has got nothing on Earth—at least during the summer fire season. [Last year's Canadian wildfires](#), sparked by lightning and fueled by high temperatures and drought, [torched more than 71,000 square miles](#) of land in Canada—an area the size of North Dakota—and

[yellowed out skies in the U.S.](#) from the Midwest to the Northeast to the mid-Atlantic states. But the U.S. is playing with matches too. [California's wildfire season](#) runs from April through October—peaking in the summer—with megadroughts and heat waves driving the flames. Of the state's 20 largest fires, half occurred from 2017 to 2022. Climate change, of course, plays a regrettable role in all of this.

## Crime and punishment

Nothing puts bad guys in a bad mood like hot weather—or so it seems. [A 2019 study](#) by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that on days with a maximum temperature above 85°F, all crime increases by 2.2% and violent crime by 5.7%. [A 2023 study](#) in *PLOS One* attributed this to what is known as the Theory of Routine Activities, which postulates that for crime to occur, three factors must be present: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and an absence of guards or surveillance. Of these, it is the second one—the suitable target—that is especially common in summer, according to the 2023 study, with greater numbers of people out on the streets.

As for the first variable, a motivated offender, well, [even criminals](#) don't want to be outside committing a crime in a 20°-below polar vortex. During a particularly deep freeze in 2015, [Boston saw](#) a 32% drop in burglaries, a 35% drop in larceny, and 46% drop in vehicle theft. Over the same period, [New York City set a modern-day record](#), going 12 days without a homicide.

Summer's contribution to violent crime in particular may be due at least in part to the common experience of hot weather leading to hot tempers, with even the most even-keeled people more inclined to blow a seam if they can't cool off. [One 2020 study](#) found that people playing competitive video games in a hot room were more

aggressive toward their gaming partner than they were when the room was cooler.

## Daylight Saving Time

Don't get me started on Daylight Saving Time. There is just nothing to like about this spring-forward inanity. For starters, it increases energy consumption (when it was supposed to decrease it) due to greater use of air conditioning. The changes in sleep patterns it causes contribute to heart attack, stroke, inflammation, and suicide, not to mention a 6% increase in fatal traffic accidents due to circadian scrambling and overall sleepiness. Small children and teens suffer particularly when the change in the clocks affects sleep cycles.

**Read More:** *What to Know About the Latest Advances in Managing Severe Asthma*

Finally, the atmospherics are all wrong. Nighttime is nighttime, people; the sun is the party guest that won't go home if it's still out at 9 p.m. I say send it packing no later than 8 p.m. and then race back to a nice wintertime sundown at cocktail hour. Cheers.

## Trouble on the homefront

If you want to stay married, it might be wise to sleep through summer. That's the finding of a 2016 study out of the University of Washington showing that August, along with March, are the two peak months for divorce in the U.S. The reason in both cases is more or less the same: couples tend to see winter and summer vacations as untouchable family time and, even in highly stressed marriages, will make it a point to hold the ship together for those treasured stretches. Once the good times are over, however, the marriages might be too.

“People tend to face the holidays with rising expectations, despite what disappointments they might have had in years past,” said sociology professor and the study’s co-author Julie Brines, in a statement at the time the research was released. “They’re very symbolically charged moments in time.”

When those expectations are dashed, a bust-up is likelier to follow. And while both early spring and late summer were implicated equally in that study, other research by Stowe Family Law in the U.K. found that September—the tail end of summer—is the peak divorce month on the other side of the pond, with total-immersion family time throwing financial, interpersonal, and other issues into relief.

## It kills your skin

No matter how good it might feel to bake in the sun, your skin really, truly does not want a tan. In a rapidly warming world, it should come as no surprise that the sun is murder on your skin—drying it, aging it, cracking it, and much more importantly, leading to cancer. A 2022 paper in the journal *Cureus* found the highest rates of skin cancer diagnoses occurring from July to October.

Simple steps like wearing sunscreen, avoiding the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and wearing protective clothing can all help reduce the risk. Sunshine in the winter, of course, can cause similar damage, but in the summer you’re out a whole lot more and wearing a whole lot less. That—like summer as a whole—spells trouble.

*Correction: The original version of this story misstated the date of Napoleon Bonaparte’s abdication. It was 1815, not 1914.*

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## The Stealth Lobbying Cause You've Never Heard of: Wild Horses

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*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.*

The blades spin dust and dirt all around the wild horses. Barely above their manes, the operators of the screaming helicopters are corralling the mustangs and burros into a pack and driving them toward holding pens, often miles and miles away. A few animals try to break from the pack, but most move like a school of fish, even those exhibiting obvious injuries and signs of exhaustion. Those who do make it to the metal caging are sometimes bloodied from crashing into each other or the man-made barriers.

And it's all entirely sanctioned and funded by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, in an effort to move wild horses off public

lands that, in some estimations, cannot sustain so many free-roaming animals.

The practice seems as brutal as it does bizarre. Despite the mythologies of the West, herd management is done more by aircraft than lasso these days. And it's often handled by the same companies intent on making room for their own cattle to roam, a twisted insiders' game that lets the giant mega-ranchers cash in not just on flying the helicopters that clear the area, but then again with pennies-on-the-dollar deals to allow private cattle and sheep to graze on public lands.

After being brutally rounded up, many of the wild horses, seen by many as a symbol of the West's independent nature, are off-loaded to commercial pens. If they're really lucky, they get adopted by a well-meaning and honest farmer who can qualify for subsidies and credits to help take care of these animals less as a charity case and more of a cause. If they're super-unlucky, they find themselves at auction where dodgy traders can transport them across the border to Mexico or, to a much lesser degree, to Canada, where the processing of horsemeat for foodstuffs is legal.

“All you have to do is see one roundup and see one colt chased to the ground to realize this is an awful practice,” says Rep. Dina Titus, a Democrat from Nevada, the state with the most wild horses and burros, most of them on the 86% of the state that is federal lands. “[The Bureau of Land Management] is supposed to humanely round up and care for wild horses and burros, but humanely to me is not running them down with helicopters.”

Titus, along with Republican Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania, are the lead sponsors of a short, four-page [bill](#) that would outlaw the use of helicopters and airplanes to herd wild horses and burros, as well as demand a study of alternative ways to round up the animals and control over-population, perhaps by fertility interventions. The measure has been introduced before and

had zero luck; the ranchers gaining off the practice have deep political ties not just to Western politicians but also the rank-and-file bureaucrats at the Bureau of Land Management and its parent organization, the U.S. Department of Interior.

“The [Bureau of Land Management] is captured by the mentality of the cattlemen. They look at the horses as a pest and something to get rid of, and something that infringes on ranchers,” Titus says.

The Bureau of Land Management’s chief spokesman declined to respond with an on-the-record comment about the pending legislation. But defenders of the policy are not wrong when they note that horses can be damaging to the land and that an outside [analysis](#) from the University of Wyoming says the use of helicopters is efficient and safe. At times, the helicopters can fall back as much as a half-mile if the horses and burros are moving in the right direction. And over-populating, now or in the future, can threaten an entire herd or species. Of the 155 million acres of public land [set aside](#) for animal use, wild horses are allocated 27 million acres, while cattle and sheep have control over the vast majority.

That doesn’t mean the practice of helo-policing mustangs, as they are also called, is any less shocking to see.

In a documentary about the process, filmmaker Ashely Avis [chronicles](#) the round-ups of these animals across several years. The footage from *Wild Beauty: Mustang Spirit of The West* is shocking and occasionally cruel.

“The biggest problem with the entire fight for wild horses is most people don’t know,” Avis tells me at the U.S. Capitol on a recent evening after two days of meeting with lawmakers trying to push for support of the Titus-Fitzpatrick measure. “There’s nothing humane about it. And so, and we’ve seen little foals run their hooves off in these stampedes, we’ve seen them get crushed.”

While Avis' narration certainly ascribes dodgy motives to Interior bureaucrats, the press-management tactics reveal less than the conditions that deliver the mustangs to their staging and transport sites. The money behind it seems like a loop between bureaucrats, ranchers, and their helicopter pilots in a closed system that nefariously protects cattle and sheep at the expense of horses. Since 2006, the Bureau of Land Management has contracted more than \$57 million in air-based round-ups. In fiscal year 2022 alone, that number approached \$7 million.

Most lawmakers, frankly, aren't terribly interested in prodding the ranchers, who are an incredibly sophisticated lobby with strong sympathy among voters. And the federal money involved in this practice amounts to a rounding error in a federal budget that topped \$6 trillion in fiscal 2022. Who can be against ranchers? Well, they're about to meet one surprisingly experienced advocate who, while still appreciating ranchers, has zero sympathy for their helo-herding.

"I want the horses to still be able to work their magic on future generations in terms of what they provide as reminders that we're not the only species worth protecting," Diane Lane tells me in a quiet room in the Capitol. "With all of the controversy around what bipeds are doing, I'm happy to talk about the four-leggeds." The Oscar-nominated actress had just spent the day traipsing across the Capitol complex meeting with lawmakers who, to a tee, all agreed to sign onto the measure after hearing her pitch.

"She's still batting a thousand. Every single one of them as of this morning signed on the bill," Fitzpatrick said as he welcomed Lane for a reception after another long day of meetings.

The Capitol Building sees its fair share of Hollywood celebrities, many of whom crash the Hill to promote a pet cause before jetting back to movie sets. Lane is different. She quietly [lobbied](#) Congress for four years to ban the harvesting of shark fins for soup while the

fish is still alive. She not only knows her way around the Capitol, she understands the slow grind of moving legislation and the pitfalls of throwing around huge entourages to summon attention. When she led a reception with Titus, Fitzpatrick, and Avis, she carried her own bag and briefing material and had just one adviser keeping her on schedule. (She didn't need help staying on message. Once off-book, she knows her material.)

Here, it's important to be realistic. This is an election year. Congress can barely keep the lights on as it lurches from one stopgap spending measure to another. Western lawmakers aren't eager to pick fights with the powerful cattlemen in their state. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, a former Democratic member of the House and a member of Biden's administration, has been, frankly, less than sympathetic to the petition. And the Biden administration broadly hasn't particularly been eager to seem like it's cracking down on ranchers heading into a re-election bid where, especially in Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona, ranch hands vote and mustangs do not.

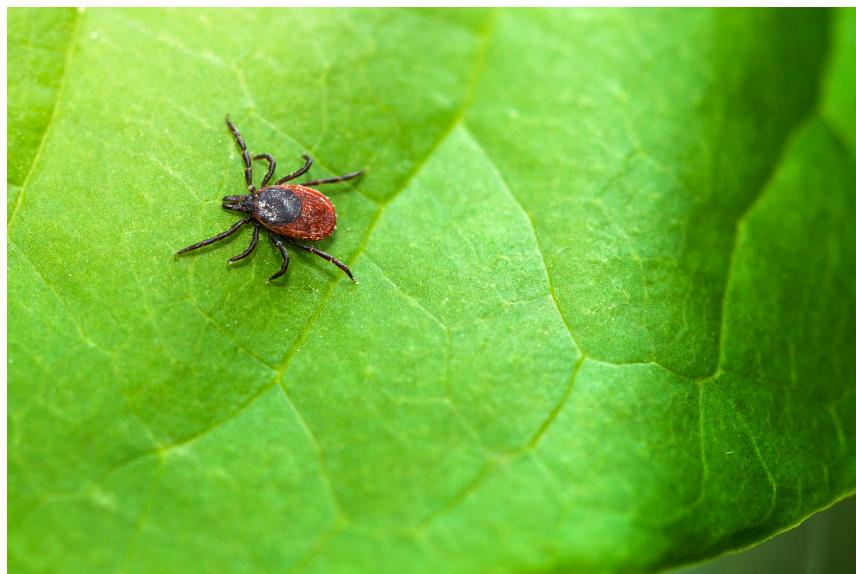
So, for the time being, the Bureau of Land Management will continue to engage in this practice that, from time to time, does draw a temporary order to hit pause, but never a permanent ban. Interior officials say they're only doing their job to protect the land for future generations of the endangered mustangs. But folks like Titus and Fitzpatrick—with the wattage and resolve of Lane willing to engage any lawmaker any time on the issue—are going to keep fighting. It's uphill, for sure, but certainly less steep than some of the ridges that the wild horses and burros climb to survive on whatever grows in those wild Western lands.

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## Here's Exactly What to Do If You Find a Tick on You

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



If it feels like you're suddenly seeing ticks everywhere, it's not in your head. The U.S. tick [population has exploded in recent years](#), largely driven by climate change, which means spotting one of these blood-sucking pests is an unfortunately routine event for people in many parts of the country.

Ticks are best known for spreading [Lyme disease](#), an illness that can cause flu-like symptoms, body aches, fatigue, and more. By some estimates, almost half a million people in the U.S. are diagnosed with Lyme each year, with the blacklegged ticks that spread the condition particularly prevalent in the Northeast, Mid-

Atlantic, and parts of the Midwest and Pacific Coast. Lyme isn't the only tick-associated illness to know about, though. The creatures' bites can [spread a range of rarer illnesses](#), including Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Powassan virus disease, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, and alpha-gal syndrome. [Disease-carrying varieties are found](#) throughout the U.S., according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Despite how prevalent ticks are, many people don't know exactly what to do if they spot one on their body. Here's a step-by-step guide to tick prevention, removal, and follow-up care, according to experts.

## How to prevent a tick bite

Prevention is always the best medicine. So it's key to wear bug spray—[products containing DEET are most effective](#)—and dress strategically when you'll be in tick-heavy environments, such as woodlands, fields, parks, and even some residential backyards, says Stephen Rich, executive director of the New England Center of Excellence in Vector-borne Diseases, a consortium of experts who specialize in tick- and mosquito-borne illnesses.

Wearing light-colored clothing during outdoor activities can make it easier to spot dark ticks if they get on you, Rich says. And, though it's "not a fashion statement," tucking your shirt into your pants, and your pants into your socks, makes it harder for ticks to get on bare skin, he adds.

**Read More:** [\*Long Dismissed, Chronic Lyme Is Finally Getting Its Moment\*](#)

Wearing long sleeves and pants will also minimize the amount of skin exposed to ticks, says Yetrib Hathout, director of the Binghamton University Tick-borne Disease Center in New York.

Choosing breathable or sweat-wicking fabrics can make this advice [more tolerable on a hot day](#).

You can even treat your clothes (or buy garments that are pre-treated) with [permethrin](#), which repels ticks and insects. And if you're really worried about ticks in your yard, you can have your land treated with tick-targeting pesticides—but, Rich notes, researchers are still studying the efficacy of that approach.

## Check yourself

Hathout says it's good practice to check your body for ticks after any outdoor activity during tick season, which generally runs from spring to fall and peaks in the summer months. Be thorough, as ticks are drawn to crevices like the armpits, back of the knees, and groin. Remember to check your scalp, too.

If you do find a tick on yourself, don't panic. The vast majority of tick bites do not lead to disease, for several reasons.

First, not all types of ticks transmit disease to humans—and even if you're bitten by one that can, there's a good chance it's not actively infected. For example, blacklegged ticks are found in the southeastern U.S. but rarely cause Lyme there, [according to the CDC](#). Even in the Northeast, where Lyme is much more common, anywhere from roughly 25% to 50% of blacklegged ticks are actually infected, depending on the time of year and stage of their lifecycle, Rich says.

Even if you have the misfortune of being bitten by an infected tick, the CDC says it generally takes at least a day for it to transmit disease. (Rich says the average is more like 48 hours.) That gives you plenty of time to act if you find one.

All told, [some estimates suggest](#) the risk of contracting Lyme from a blacklegged tick bite is only about 1% to 3%, although that risk

goes up the longer it's in place.

## Remove it

If you find a tick crawling on your body but not yet attached, dispose of it by drowning it in rubbing alcohol or flushing it down the toilet, Hathout says. [Don't crush it](#), he says, just in case the tick is carrying bacteria or other pathogens.

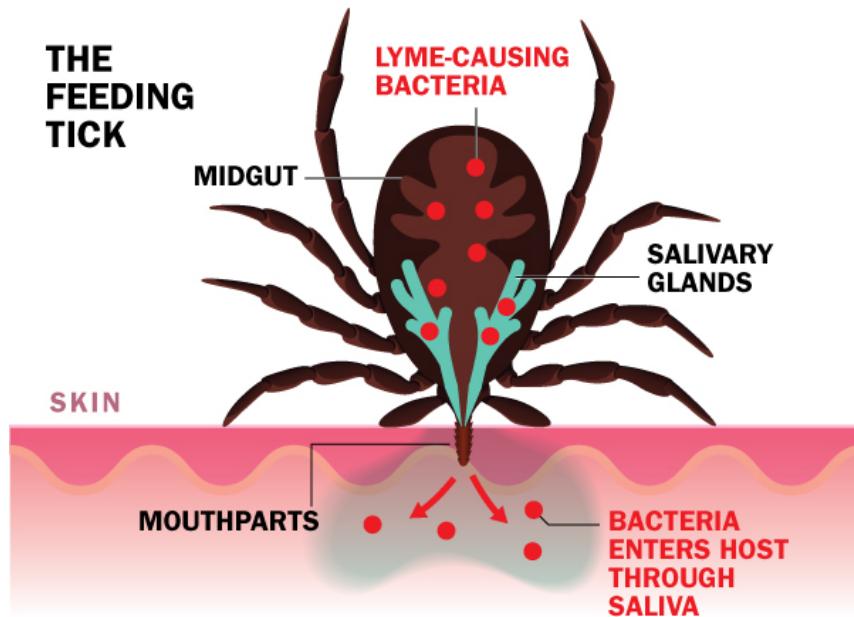
If the tick is already embedded in your skin, remove it as soon as possible. The internet is full of quirky tick-removal tactics, but Rich says there's no need to overcomplicate matters. Just grab a pair of fine-tipped tweezers, "get close to the skin, and pull the tick off," Rich says. "There's no fancy work about it."

Try to pull straight up, rather than crushing or twisting the tick, to minimize the chances of separating the tick's body from the mouth parts embedded in your skin, Hathout says. Don't worry too much if that happens, though, as any leftovers should eventually come out on their own.

After removing the tick, clean the bite site with soap and water or rubbing alcohol to minimize the chances of the area getting infected.

# How to remove a tick

Ticks can spread a range of diseases, most notably Lyme. Here's how they do it—and how to protect yourself

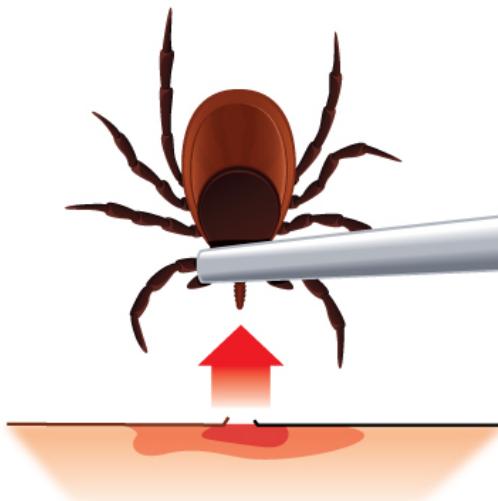


## WHAT TO DO

- ① Using fine-tipped tweezers, grab the tick as close to the skin as possible. Pull upward with steady pressure



- ② Once the tick is out, dispose of it and clean the bite site with soap and water or rubbing alcohol



TIME

## Get rid of the tick—or not

Once you've pulled off the tick, [the CDC says](#) it's fine to flush it. But some experts, including Rich, recommend popping it in a plastic bag and keeping it, just in case.

Why? If you later develop symptoms consistent with Lyme or another tick-borne illness, you could have the tick tested to see if it's carrying relevant pathogens, which could streamline your diagnosis and treatment process. "That tick basically is like woolly mammoth DNA," Rich says. "You could go back to it at any point and have it tested," even if it's dead. (When Rich is bitten by a tick, he says, he brings it in for testing right away.)

The CDC, however, [does not recommend that consumers use commercial tick testing](#) services, since the results may be inaccurate or hard to interpret. Hathout says he generally agrees with that advice, unless a doctor has specifically recommended otherwise. "Sending a tick to a lab [often] is going to cause more worry—or a false negative," he says. Even if a tick does test positive for Lyme bacteria or other pathogens, that doesn't necessarily mean you were infected.

## When to see a doctor

If you're confident a tick was on your body for less than a day—and therefore was unlikely to transmit disease—all you need to do is remove it, clean the bite site, and move on, Hathout says.

Over the next few weeks, just keep an eye out for symptoms such as a rash (a bull's-eye-shaped rash is a classic sign of Lyme disease), fatigue, headaches, muscle aches, joint pain, fever, or chills, says Dr. David Banach, an infectious-disease physician at UConn Health. If a health care provider determines these

symptoms are linked to tick exposure, they'll likely prescribe antibiotics to treat the infection.

### **Read More:** *We Used to Have a Lyme Disease Vaccine. Are We Ready to Bring One Back?*

Things are a little trickier if you're not sure how long the tick was attached. Sometimes, a tick is visibly engorged with blood, which suggests it was in place long enough to transmit disease. But it's not always easy to glance at a tick and assess how long it's been on you, Banach says—particularly since they can be as small as a poppy seed. If you think a tick may have been attached for a day or longer, consider consulting a doctor about whether you should be treated, he says.

**Some studies suggest** that preventatively taking an antibiotic after a tick bite **reduces the risk of developing Lyme disease**, and **the CDC says** it's appropriate to prescribe precautionary antibiotics in certain cases. Your doctor can help decide if that tactic is right for you, depending on factors like the prevalence of disease-carrying ticks in your area, the circumstances of your bite, and your personal health profile.

Although ticks can be creepy, Hathout says they shouldn't get in the way of enjoying the outdoors during the summer season. "I don't think we should be very, very concerned," he says. Ticks do pose health risks, but with some prevention and preparedness, those risks are manageable.

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# ‘I Don’t Have Faith in Doctors Anymore.’ Women Say They Were Pressured Into Long-Term Birth Control

Alana Semuels is an economic correspondent at TIME. She covers work, consumer spending, retail, gender, and technology. She is a four-time nominee for the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism, and has won awards from the Society of Business Editors and Writers and the Los Angeles Press Club.



Miannica Frison was in the throes of labor in 2020 when a nurse entered her room at UAB Hospital in Birmingham, Ala. Frison was screaming in pain. But rather than see how she could help, Frison recalls, the nurse said she heard Frison was having her third baby, and asked if she wanted to be sterilized immediately after she gave birth. Outraged, Frison kicked the nurse out of the room.

Doctors eventually told Frison she needed an emergency C-section. As she lay on the operating table, just moments after her son was pulled from her belly, a doctor entered the delivery room. “We can go ahead and put an IUD in right now, since you’re already open,” the doctor said, according to both Frison and her husband.

Frison was woozy from her epidural, but had experienced a traumatic birth, and at that moment, she didn’t think she wanted more children. So she allowed the doctor to insert the Mirena, an intrauterine device (IUD) that would prevent pregnancies for up to eight years. In the months that followed, she didn’t like the way the IUD was making her feel. But Frison says she couldn’t persuade her gynecologist to take it out. The doctor told her she needed to lose weight first, Frison recalls, and that there were medicines to offset the side effects she was experiencing, such as nausea.

It would be three years before Frison could get the device removed. Even then, she had to undergo three procedures, one lasting seven hours, she says, because the device had migrated to the lining of her uterus. It left her with four thumb-sized scars on her belly from where a doctor inserted an instrument to try to find the IUD. The experience caused Frison, a 32-year-old hairdresser, to have a profound mistrust of the medical system. “I don’t have faith in doctors anymore,” she says. “I can’t trust any of them.”

Frison’s experience was more common than one might expect. In the last two decades, doctors have encouraged women to choose long-acting reversible contraceptives, or LARCs, because they are the most effective method of preventing unplanned pregnancies.

Doctors and many patients like that LARCs—either IUDs, which are inserted in a woman’s uterus, or implants, which are inserted in a woman’s arm—allow women to “set it and forget it” for years. But an increasing body of evidence indicates that an important public health tool intended to give women agency over their bodies is at times deployed in ways that take it away.



A TIME investigation based on patient testimonials, medical studies, and interviews with 19 experts in the field of reproductive justice, including physicians, researchers, and advocates, found that doctors are disproportionately likely to push these contraceptives when treating Black, Latina, young, and low-income women, or to refuse to remove them when requested. This pattern, reproductive-justice experts say, reflects the race and class biases plaguing the U.S. medical system and extends a sordid and long-standing history

of America's attempts to engineer who reproduces. It also reflects what appears to be a broad push by policymakers to use birth control as a tool to curb poverty.

“The idea is that we can stop people that we don’t want to be reproducing from reproducing, but can say, ‘This is temporary because it’s removable,’” says Della Winters, a professor at California State University, Stanislaus who has studied the history of LARCs and calls the rise of so-called provider-controlled contraception targeting certain populations a type of “soft sterilization.”

Doctors pressuring patients into getting LARCs is a national phenomenon, experts say, but it may be especially prevalent in the South, where there is a troubling history of reproductive control. To explore what women are experiencing, TIME spoke with 10 women in Alabama, including four patients at UAB Hospital, who said they were pressured to get an IUD postpartum or had their doctors refuse to remove the devices when they initially asked. Four doulas who work in the state told TIME they’d witnessed doctors pressure Black women, especially those on Medicaid, into getting IUDs by asking them repeatedly during birth—but not, according to their clients, prior to it—about their preferred birth-control method and then strongly suggesting an IUD.

UAB disputed that it engages in reproductive coercion and said in an email that it follows guidance from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), which suggests that LARCs should be offered immediately postpartum as standard care. The hospital also says that its providers [receive implicit-bias training](#) to avoid disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. Patients are counseled on contraception options throughout the course of their pregnancy, the hospital says, and “every patient makes her own decision on contraception, and our team supports them in the decisions they make about their health.” Federal

privacy laws prohibit UAB from commenting on an individual patient's care, UAB says.

The ACOG says its recommendation for doctors to offer immediate postpartum LARCs refers to women who have already selected an implant or IUD as their contraceptive method. Though the group previously recommended that doctors [emphasize LARCs](#) as the most effective contraceptive, it [said in 2022](#) that it now recommends a “patient-centered” approach to contraceptive counseling. (The Alabama patients who spoke to TIME shared experiences that took place between 2016 and 2023.)

Doctors who pressure patients to get or keep LARCs may do so because they think they’re acting in the patients’ best interest, says Nikki B. Zite, an ob-gyn and professor at the University of Tennessee Graduate School of Medicine. They might advocate for women with substance-abuse problems or major health issues to get a LARC, Zite adds, because they want them to be healthy before they give birth, or might hesitate to take out a LARC because they know the devices are expensive for insurers, and that symptoms a woman experiences after insertion, like cramps or bleeding, will pass. Zite remembers being extremely enthusiastic when she first started recommending LARCs to patients in the early 2000s. Now she recognizes that could have come across as coercive. “If a patient came to me for diabetes, I would want them on insulin—that’s the most effective treatment,” she says. “I have a chart showing that LARCs are the most effective form of contraception, so doctors think, ‘Why wouldn’t I want them using a LARC?’ The answer is that reproductive health is different.”

Even if they have good intentions, doctors, in their enthusiasm for effective birth control, may strong-arm certain women into getting and keeping contraceptive methods they don’t want. TIME examined 14 separate peer-reviewed studies in which Black and Latina women and lower-income patients reported experiencing higher levels of coercion from doctors to use LARCs. In one 2022

paper that reviewed a [survey](#) of nearly 2,000 women in Delaware and Maryland, about 26% said they were pressured to get their LARC, and low-income women on Medicaid were more likely than higher-income women to feel pressured to keep it. A [separate 2022 study](#) of more than 2,000 adolescents found that Black girls were twice as likely as white ones to receive LARCs.

In five additional studies reviewed by TIME, doctors admitted either to resisting some patients' requests to remove LARCs or to pushing certain populations toward LARCs because they didn't trust them to avoid a pregnancy that the doctor viewed as undesirable. "The other thing that really frustrates the crap out of me," one doctor told researchers, according to a [study published in 2021](#), "is the patient who comes in and says, 'No, I don't want to be pregnant, but I don't use any birth control.' You want to take that person and shake them. Some of it is ignorance, some of it is cultural."

In the wake of the [Supreme Court's 2022 Dobbs decision](#), which overturned the constitutional right to an abortion, the question of just how widespread this pressure may be takes on greater urgency. Research shows that doctors in states with restrictive abortion laws are redoubling their emphasis on the use of LARCs. These may be well-meaning attempts to help women and teens avoid a pregnancy they don't want and would not have the option to terminate. But reproductive-justice advocates say pushing LARCs on poor women or women of color is also a form of reproductive control. It can not only strip patients of autonomy over their bodies, but also erode their trust in medical providers, causing them to withdraw from care and eschew birth control altogether.

"This is when the culture of medicine that centers providers' perspectives over those of patients has its absolute worst impact," says Christine Dehlendorf, a physician and professor at the University of California, San Francisco, who was one of the first to study how provider bias affects LARC counseling. "We are

explicitly able to take away people's autonomy by refusing to remove contraceptive methods, but all the time, providers can believe that they're doing the best thing for the patient, and that they know better."

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**LeAnn, a stay-at-home mom** from Tuscaloosa, Ala., was on Medicaid when she gave birth to her second child in 2018, at age 20. Her doctor kept asking her about her plans for contraception after she gave birth, says LeAnn, who did not want her real name used to protect her privacy. She eventually agreed to get the Mirena inserted at her six-week postpartum visit.

Almost immediately, LeAnn says, she started waking up in the middle of the night with uterine pain so severe that she couldn't stand up straight. After three months of pain, she says she asked her doctor to remove the IUD, but he refused, saying she needed to choose another form of birth control. The pain was so bad, LeAnn recalls, that she would sometimes end up in the emergency room. "I just suffered for a year," she says. Finally she decided the best strategy was to lie and tell her doctor that she wanted another baby; with that, he removed the IUD.

LeAnn is white, but says her doctor knew she was on Medicaid. Research suggests that doctors are often hesitant to remove IUDs in women who they know are poor or who have children at home. A [2016 study found](#) that 1 in 4 women who went to a Bronx, N.Y., clinic asking doctors to remove their IUDs were not successful. "These ideas of who should and shouldn't have children are still very much influencing our policies and practices, even if it's more subtle than in the past," says Mieke Eeckhaut, a sociologist at the University of Delaware, who found that young, economically disadvantaged, unmarried, and Hispanic women disproportionately reported being pressured to keep their LARCs.

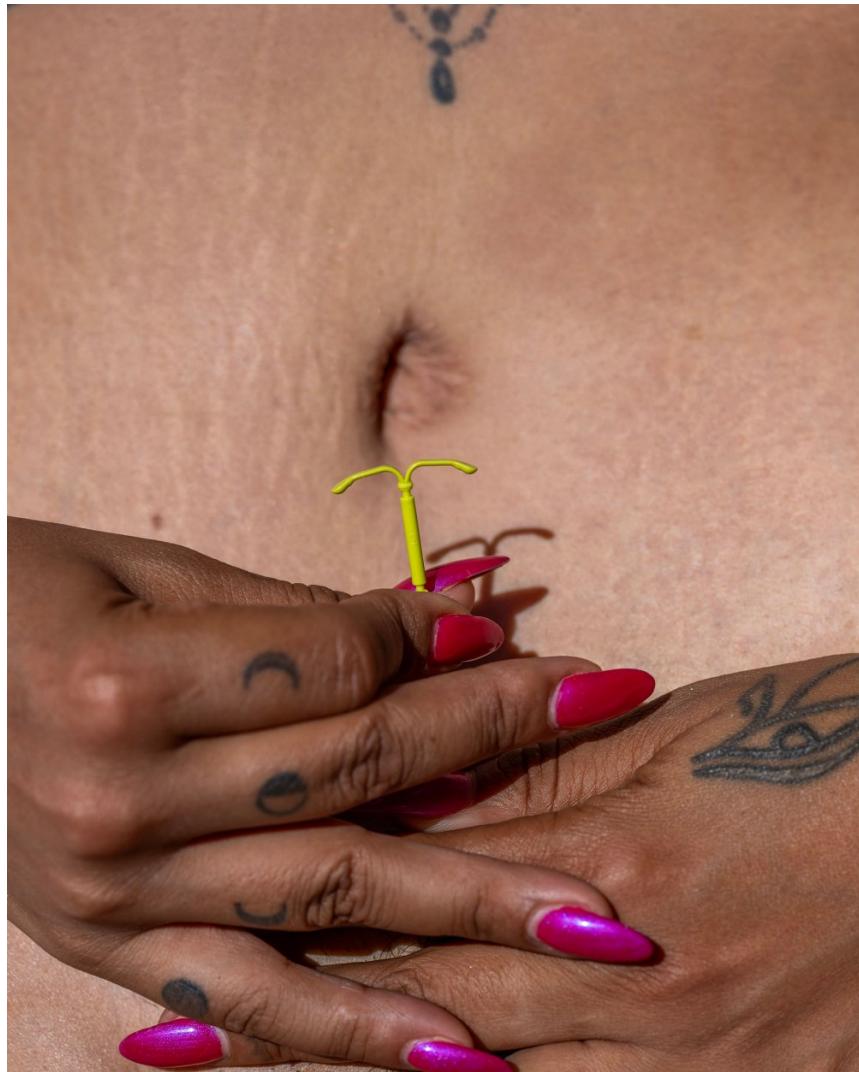
Systemic racism and classism have long pervaded the American medical system, including reproduction. Before birth-control methods like the pill and IUDs were legally available, policymakers used sterilization to prevent certain "low-status" women from having children. Laws permitting states to sterilize women whom lawmakers thought would be unfit parents were so common throughout the South that the civil-rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer coined the term "[Mississippi Appendectomy](#)" after she went to have a uterine tumor removed and unknowingly got a hysterectomy instead.

**Read More:** [Why Maternity Care Is Underpaid.](#)

Advances in birth control in the 1950s gave women more options, but it also gave doctors a measure of control over who got pregnant. [Margaret Sanger](#), the founder of Planned Parenthood, promoted the pill in part as a way to limit reproduction in “defective” populations. After the FDA approved the Norplant, a small contraceptive rod implanted in a woman’s upper arm, in 1990, states began pushing the device on low-income Black women, [incentivizing welfare recipients](#) with cash bonuses.

In the 2000s, pharmaceutical companies started rolling out a new wave of [extremely effective hormonal IUDs](#), including the Mirena. To doctors, these devices, alongside safer implants introduced in the late 1990s, were something of a miracle. With one short insertion procedure, they could help women avoid pregnancies for long periods of time. (The duration of each device varies, but they generally last from about three to 10 years.) LARCs are not only 20 times more effective than the pill. They also offer the promise of convenience: no more worrying about picking up a prescription from a pharmacy on a regular basis, or remembering to take the medication at the same time every day.

But as these devices entered the market, American women stayed away from them—just 5% used them in the late 2000s, [compared to 19% of women](#) in places like Sweden. This reticence prompted doctors to launch a campaign to market LARCs to women perceived to be at risk of unplanned pregnancy, a policy fixation in the wake of the welfare-reform push during the Clinton Administration. In 2007, an anonymous funder—Bloomberg later [reported that it was the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation](#)—approached researchers at Washington University in St. Louis with a goal: promoting and providing the most effective contraception in an effort [to prevent unintended pregnancies](#). They launched the Contraceptive CHOICE project, which recruited women “at the [highest risk](#) for unintended pregnancy”—a group they defined as minorities, poor women, and women under 25.



The CHOICE project did not ask those women which type of birth control best fit their lifestyles, or if they were seeking a method that they could stop on their own without a doctor's assistance. Instead, doctors used a standardized script to counsel women that LARCs were the most effective contraceptive and that they could receive the devices for free. As a result, 75% of the women in the program chose a LARC, compared to just 5% of women attending the same clinics before the CHOICE counseling was launched, according to a [study of the project](#), which included 9,256 women.

The initial results, [published in 2010](#), were a watershed in reproductive health. Counseling women to choose LARCs appeared to be a relatively simple way to prevent unintended pregnancies, and CHOICE researchers trumpeted the potential to save U.S. taxpayers [\\$11 billion annually](#) in costs associated with

unintended births. Policymakers and philanthropists hailed LARCs as a “silver bullet” that would reduce unintended pregnancies and save states huge sums in public benefit costs. The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation reportedly put \$200 million into research and promotion of IUDs. (The foundation did not respond to a request for comment.) Public health groups like the American Academy of Pediatrics and ACOG launched “LARC-first” campaigns to increase uptake. The World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention launched a “tiered effectiveness” model urging doctors to talk about LARCs and sterilization as the best way to prevent pregnancy. Many providers were also counseled to ask women “one key question”: whether they were planning on getting pregnant within a year. If the answer was no, doctors were supposed to suggest LARCs.

Informing women about their contraceptive choices is a laudable goal. So is ensuring access for women who may not be able to afford them otherwise. (Since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, insurers have been required to cover contraception; Medicaid also covers the cost of contraception for lower-income women.) But experts say the LARC-first campaigns become problematic when doctors focus on effectiveness to the exclusion of other factors, including the ability to start and stop birth control when women desire. “There’s been a lot of targeted information about LARCs, which is great if that’s what the patient wants,” says Kavita Shah Arora, the division director of the ob-gyn department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “If we’re pushing people into a form of birth control that they don’t want, that is not great.”

States like Delaware and Colorado launched programs to increase access to birth control, offering a range of contraceptive options but emphasizing the effectiveness of LARCs. Colorado said in 2017 that it saved nearly \$70 million in public-assistance costs because of LARCs. “Better birth outcomes, a reduced teenage birthrate and

millions of dollars saved are cause for celebration,” Delaware Governor Jack Markell, a Democrat, wrote in a 2016 [New York Times op-ed](#) about his state’s efforts to promote LARCs and save taxpayers money.

But the notion of fighting poverty and saving money by reducing unplanned pregnancies misses a big point: poverty is not caused by pregnancy. Many women are poor when they get pregnant because of entrenched social issues. Advising them to wait for a better time to have a baby implies that women who are poor shouldn’t procreate. Saying that unplanned pregnancies cause poverty “stigmatizes poor women, especially poor women of color, and blames them for profound inequality that’s actually caused by things like lack of access to meaningful employment or safe schools,” says Patrick Grzanka, a psychology professor at the University of Tennessee who has studied LARC coercion.

Alarmed by efforts to target LARCs at low-income populations, a group of women’s health organizations led by [Sister Song](#), a nonprofit dedicated to reproductive justice for women of color, put out a [statement of principles about LARCs](#) in 2016. They warned that as funders set targets for the number of LARCs inserted, women reported being talked down to and undermined by doctors, who “treat them as though they do not have the basic human right to determine what happens with their bodies.” The group rejected efforts to direct women to any particular method and cautioned providers against making assumptions based on race, ethnicity, age, or economic status.

The statement was endorsed by more than 150 organizations, but it’s taken a while for actual practices to change. That’s partly because many doctors were trained in a LARC-first approach and might not know that there are new recommendations about how to talk about contraception. Indeed, ACOG recently issued [new guidance](#) that eschewed a LARC-first approach and recommended patient-centered contraceptive counseling. But one recent study

found that even some medical providers who said they were embracing this approach nonetheless [rejected patients' requests](#) to have their LARCs removed.

“I’ll never just walk in a room, “Oh, we’re just taking the IUD out?”” one medical provider told researchers about the [limitations of patient-centered care](#). “Sometimes I’ll get them to, ‘Let me just examine you, do some cultures, let me do an ultrasound and make sure it’s in the right position.’ And then secretly I know I’m not going to fix their bleeding, but secretly I’m hoping that they’ll just leave and not come back in … or they just can’t get back in to get it removed and things will calm down.”

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**Charity Howard, a doula in Alabama**, says there's a striking difference in what happens to different types of women when they go to the hospital to give birth. Black women on Medicaid are asked to consent to having an IUD inserted immediately postpartum, according to Howard. But "when they have private insurance," she adds, "they don't run into this issue." Doctors can be persistent, according to Howard, who says she witnessed a doctor at UAB persuade one of Howard's clients, a lesbian who was pregnant from a sperm donor, to get an IUD, even though the woman was not at risk of an unintended pregnancy. When Howard protested, she says she was escorted out of the hospital. (In its statement to TIME, UAB said it could not comment on individual patients.)

When Crystina Hughes went to UAB in 2019 to give birth, she planned to wait until her six-week follow-up appointment before deciding on a form of birth control. But as soon as her daughter was born, Hughes says, a doctor asked if she wanted to get an IUD inserted, noting her cervix was already dilated. Hughes says she declined, but when her husband went with her newborn daughter to the ICU, the doctor returned to ask again.

Hughes, who is Black, reasoned that if the doctor asked twice, it had to be important. So she agreed. Her milk dried up around six weeks, and she had to have the IUD removed within a year because of a prolapsed uterus, says Hughes, 35, who has since become a doula. Hughes says she often sees her clients pressured into getting LARCs, once even while doctors were weighing a woman's newborn. "It really took me becoming a doula to realize that I was coerced into getting the IUD," says Hughes. "It's like, 'Can you let her have 24 hours before you ask her if she's thinking about birth control?'" (UAB says that it provides equal care to all patients, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, or religion, and that to not offer a patient contraception based on their sexual orientation would be discriminatory.)

There are reasons a doctor might want to insert an IUD right after a woman gives birth. The patient may already be on pain medication, so it won't hurt as much, and she's less likely to come back pregnant with another baby in a few months. Some women on Medicaid also lose their coverage soon after they give birth, which could be another reason doctors push IUDs on them and not others. Studies have found that IUDs are more likely to fall out or migrate if they're inserted immediately postpartum, but ACOG says that it has reviewed "[cost-benefit analysis data](#)" that suggests placing IUDs right after a woman has given birth is the best approach, "especially for women at greatest risk of not attending the postpartum follow-up visit." Still, reproductive-justice advocates say that pressuring a woman after the enormous challenge of childbirth, when she may be less likely to resist, is problematic. And they warn that ACOG's criteria means doctors may pitch LARCs differently based on their biases about who they think will—or won't—show up for a follow-up visit.

Some of the discrepancy in who is directed to LARCs is also built into the health care system. Medicaid covers the postpartum IUD insertions in many states, while private insurance doesn't, in part because of the higher expulsion rate for devices placed at this time. Hospitals are also often compensated by one lump sum, called the global fee, for a woman's pregnancy and delivery care, which means they can lose money if they pay for and insert a LARC postpartum as part of that care. Since 2012, however, 43 states have [altered their Medicaid policy](#) so that hospitals could receive extra compensation for inserting an IUD or implant immediately after a woman gave birth, a change that may have incentivized hospitals to push this particular method of contraception on women with Medicaid but not others.

**Read More:** [\*She Just Had a Baby. Soon, She'll Start 7th Grade.\*](#)

A study of the program in South Carolina, which adopted this policy in 2012, found that some women were dissatisfied with how

providers talked to them about LARCs. Three out of 10 women who received a postpartum LARC later tried to get it removed, but encountered problems, [the study found](#). “They just keep promoting these long-term methods,” one Black woman told researchers, recalling her encounters with doctors during her hospital stay. “It’s like they’re getting a commission or something.”

The pressure doesn’t necessarily stop after delivery. When Rauslyn Adams gave birth at UAB in 2016, she says she was told that she would lose access to Medicaid if she didn’t get an IUD—which, she says, she later found out was untrue. Not wanting to lose her health care, Adams agreed to get the Mirena at her six-week postpartum visit. Adams says her milk production slowed soon after she got it. When she asked a doctor to take it out, the doctor refused, Adams says. When she successfully pleaded with another doctor to remove the device, she says, her milk supply improved. “They really treated me like a dumb poor Black woman,” says Adams, who went back to UAB twice to complain in the months after she gave birth. (UAB says that all patients are counseled on contraception and options available to them throughout their pregnancy, and that these conversations are documented and confirmed when they are admitted to the hospital. Consent forms are signed for the chosen plan, the hospital says.)

Power dynamics in the South sometimes make Black women feel like they can’t refuse doctors’ recommendations, says Aisha Prewitt, a doula who works with women in Birmingham and who has observed postpartum coercion. “They will say, ‘It’s not coercion, it’s birth control,’” Prewitt says. “But they’re not presenting other options. Even if the women ask about other options, it’s, ‘Oh, you don’t want to be bothered with the pill. Let’s give you something that requires no thought.’” That pressure is heightened around the experience of birth because Alabama has the [highest rates of maternal mortality](#) in the U.S., and the numbers are particularly bad for Black women. . “A lot of Black women think,

“I’ll go along with anything the doctors say,” Prewitt says, “just to make sure I can get out of this hospital alive.”

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Since the *Dobbs* ruling, according to early findings by researchers in North Carolina, many doctors have narrowed their focus to promoting the most effective contraception, like LARCs, while actively dissuading young people from choosing shorter-acting methods, especially in states with more restrictive reproduction laws. A soon-to-be-published study from researchers in South Carolina, which interviewed more than 1,200 women in five Southeastern states, found that nearly half of Black women overall experienced pressure from providers about birth control, compared to 37% of white women.

Some of this pressure is enshrined in law. In May 2023, for example, North Carolina passed a bill limiting access to abortion after the 12th week of pregnancy. It included a provision awarding \$3.5 million in birth-control funding to health departments and community centers, with the stipulation that the funding could be used for only LARCs, not the pill, and only for poor or uninsured patients. “When this version came through in the wee hours of the night, I highlighted that section, and wrote in the margins, ‘REPRODUCTIVE COERCION’ because it was explicitly about LARCs instead of about funding any contraceptive options,” says Erica Pettigrew, a primary-care physician in North Carolina. “I was really disappointed in this earmark, but I saw so many of my colleagues thinking this was a good thing.”

Adolescent-health experts worry this coercion will only get worse as policymakers and physicians try to prevent those in states with abortion restrictions from getting pregnant in the first place. “The slippery slope that we will go down is another type of reproductive restriction by coercing people to use these long-term methods who may not have chosen them,” says Aisha Mays, a doctor and founder of the Dream Youth Clinic, which provides free health services in the San Francisco Bay Area.

That pressure has compounding effects. Women who feel pressured into getting an IUD or implant are less likely to trust their doctors or stay on any birth control as a result, according to studies. Some women turn to DIY medical care if they don’t trust their providers. A viral TikTok trend shows women removing their own IUDs because, in some cases, they can’t get an appointment or, in others, because doctors won’t remove them.

It’s one more example of the disparate treatment poor women and women of color receive when it comes to medical care. Black women are twice as likely to be coerced into procedures like inductions and epidurals during perinatal and birth care, according to [researchers](#). Some doulas in Alabama say that after bad

experiences with labor and delivery, women are electing to have home births rather than risk being [ignored or undermined](#) by doctors. Once they feel that doctors aren't taking their concerns seriously, women are less likely to seek out and receive [important screenings](#) and preventative health measures, which leads to worse health outcomes overall.

Miannica Frison is a prime example of this erosion of trust. She doesn't currently have an ob-gyn, and after her years-long battle to get her IUD removed, Frison vowed to never get birth control again. One of the biggest ironies for Frison is that doctors seem so obsessed with getting her on birth control, but seem to care so little about her actual pregnancy outcome. Frison did not want a C-section, but doctors gave her little choice, she says. Because UAB is a teaching hospital, there were constantly people coming into the room to poke and prod her, she says, sometimes not even introducing themselves when they stuck fingers into her body.

UAB says that decisions about a vaginal or C-section birth are made in the best interest of patients' health and safety, and that every woman provides written informed consent for "a full range of services" when admitted, including a C-section. "UAB is one of the largest and most advanced academic medical centers in the nation, so patients benefit from the expertise of highly trained care teams who provide a patient with evidence-based care," a spokeswoman said in an email, adding that medical students are not involved in hands-on care in delivering a baby.

Frison was discharged from the hospital on Mother's Day. Soon after she got home, she began vomiting. She'd been discharged, she says, even though she'd told doctors she felt extremely sick; when she was readmitted to the hospital, she says, she found out that she had sepsis. Frison couldn't nurse her son because she had to spend five days in the hospital without him; when she got out, he wouldn't latch.

“They were happy to tell you about how you could get sterilized,” Frison says. “But when it came to aftercare, or pregnancy care, none of that mattered.”



—With reporting by *Leslie Dickstein*

*This article was produced as a part of a project for the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism’s 2023 Impact Fund for Reporting on Health Equity and Health Systems.*

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## Do Less. It's Good for You

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



You take a vacation day, but [get distracted by the thought of your work](#) inbox filling up. Or you sit down to watch a movie and immediately feel guilty about all the tasks still on your to-do list. Or perhaps you splurge on a [massage](#), but barely enjoy it because your thoughts are racing the entire time.

If any of these sound familiar, you’re not alone. Relaxing may sound like the easiest thing in the world, but for many people it’s anything but.

Erin Westgate, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Florida, learned that a decade ago, when she helped design [a study](#) to test the effects of letting people do nothing but sit with their thoughts for a few minutes. “We had this idea that if we gave people a few moments in their busy days to just sit and slow down and be alone with their thoughts, that they’d find it really enjoyable and it would be relaxing and increase well-being,” Westgate says. The opposite happened: people were so uncomfortable doing nothing that many opted to give themselves small electric shocks instead.

Doing nothing, as Westgate’s study illustrated, can be difficult because most of us aren’t used to thinking without turning those thoughts into actions—a disconnect that can be “incredibly cognitively intense,” she says.

Researchers including Michelle Newman, a professor of psychology at the Pennsylvania State University, have also studied the concepts of “[relaxation anxiety](#)” and “[relaxation sensitivity](#),” which relate to the discomfort, boredom, or unease some people feel when they slow down. For some, “There’s this view that, ‘I should always be busy doing something,’” Newman says. “Often people feel like it’s not okay to just be reading a good book or watching a good program on TV.”

No wonder. [Productivity and hard work](#) are nothing if not the American Way, with mainstream institutions from government to church urging people to stay busy, says Celeste Headlee, author of the book [\*Do Nothing: How to Break Away from Overworking, Overdoing, and Underliving\*](#). “Our society has valued really, really toxic things,” she says. “We have for generations been brainwashed” to believe that productivity is morally superior to rest

—so it's no wonder relaxing sometimes feels uncomfortable or even wrong, Headlee says. [Research shows](#) that people are, to varying degrees, motivated by what they feel they “should” be doing; some may feel guilty when they deviate from that.

Rebecca Schaumberg, an assistant professor at the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, has [studied the positive side of work-related guilt](#), finding that people who are guilt-prone tend to be more productive and reliable workers. But in recent years, she says, she has come to question whether guilt is good for people, or just the organizations that employ them. “Guilt can be good in the workplace, but it doesn’t always mean it’s good for the person who feels it,” she says—especially if it prevents them from ever taking time to step away and decompress.

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The truth is, rest and relaxation are vital to well-being. Chronic stress negatively affects nearly every aspect of mental and physical health, even contributing to [higher risks for chronic disease](#) and [premature death](#). Meanwhile, [rest may boost](#) your health, quality of life, and longevity. Getting better at resting and relaxing, then, isn’t frivolous; it could actually be lifesaving.

Here’s how to start.

## Reframe what “counts” as rest

If the [idea of meditating makes you break out in hives](#), that’s okay. Scientifically speaking, “relaxation” just means activating your parasympathetic nervous system—the one that handles bodily processes you don’t think about, like breathing and digestion—instead of your sympathetic nervous system, which is [in charge of your stress response](#), says Christina Luberto, an assistant professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School who has studied relaxation. “You can elicit that physiological state in any activity

that involves a single, pointed focus while setting aside intrusive or unrelated distractions,” Luberto explains.

Anything from gardening to cooking to reading to your kids could fit the bill, she says. These activity-oriented forms of relaxation may be especially beneficial for people who don’t enjoy slower mindfulness practices, like meditation. Often, Luberto says, the pressure to feel zen during these sessions contributes to anxiety—so trying to push through a “relaxation” practice that isn’t working for you may do more harm than good.

### **Read More:** [\*How to Get Real Rest\*](#)

Westgate seconds that advice. People often ruminate and get anxious if they simply sit and think about what they need to do or what happened to them that day—but find it restorative to [write those thoughts in a journal](#). “By actually physically doing something...we’re reducing some of the [cognitive] demand,” Westgate says. In other words, it can be helpful to do a little something when you’re doing nothing.

## **Set boundaries**

When work creeps into your personal life—ducking out of Sunday brunch to check your emails, for example—that’s “polluted time,” Headlee says. If your relaxation hours are polluted, you’re not reaping their full benefits. What’s more, you may be reinforcing the idea that you “should” be accomplishing tasks even during your downtime.

To keep [your free time](#) free, Headlee recommends writing down your working hours and posting them somewhere visible as a reminder to yourself. Just as a store wouldn’t reopen for a customer who arrived after it closed, Headlee says, you shouldn’t make exceptions to your hours when you get a late-night email or feel the itch to check in with the boss on a Sunday afternoon. “Closed is

closed,” she says. For extra reinforcement, consider adding a line about your working hours to your email signature or telling your friends and family about the boundaries you’ve set so they can hold you accountable.

## **Remember to relax your body, too**

Lots of people walk around with muscular tension that keeps them in a stressed-out state, feeling frazzled even when they’re trying to relax. Newman recommends tensing, then releasing, different muscles in the body to help release pent-up stress. [Breathing exercises](#) can also help catalyze a relaxation response.

**Read More:** [How to Get Back to Sleep After Waking Up at Night](#)

## **Consider seeing a therapist**

Not all busy people have relaxation anxiety or sensitivity, Luberto notes. If you’re active by nature but also enjoy your downtime, however occasional, there’s probably no cause for concern. But if relaxing feels hard or impossible to you—whether because you’re guilty or anxious or distracted—it may be time to call on a professional, she says. Psychological techniques like cognitive behavioral therapy may help.

## **Start small, then practice**

If you struggle to unwind, don’t dive straight into the deep end by booking a weeklong beach vacation. Start by finding small moments in your day to practice slowing down and getting comfortable just *being*. And pick moments strategically, choosing those when you’re most likely to succeed—like during your morning shower, Westgate says.

Like most things in life, resting gets easier the more you do it, Headlee says. Slowing down may feel uncomfortable or even shameful at first, but once you train your brain, it will get easier, she says. “It’s going to take a little time to teach your brain that you can not answer that email and nothing will happen, nothing will explode,” Headlee says. “You just have to keep doing it.”

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## How to Take the Perfect Nap

Matt Fuchs lives in Maryland and writes about health, science, and technology. Follow him on [X](#).



A former boss once assigned me to the only office on our floor with a column right down the middle. She apologized, but I quickly sensed my advantage. Positioning my desk behind this eyesore, I could nap after lunch without detection, head angled toward my computer screen in case someone walked in. These covert catnaps were less about laziness than productivity. They transformed me from lunch-laden zombie to fully functional human—and a better employee.

Not everyone is lucky enough to have a personal napping column. But stigma around napping in American workplaces is [slowly changing](#), in light of the growing recognition that sleep (even the daytime kind) can help productivity. [One in five Americans](#) now nap on the job. “Napping might be where nighttime sleep was 25 years ago,” says writer Daniel Pink, author of [\*WHEN: The Scientific Secrets of Perfect Timing\*](#), which extols the virtues of

napping. Some employers are realizing, “maybe napping isn’t a sign of weakness,” Pink says.

In fact, research suggests your workday siesta builds several strengths, including brain health. In our early 20s, the brain starts shrinking, which increases dementia risk and slows cognition. In nappers, though, brain size is better preserved, according to [this 2023 study](#), possibly because naps can reduce anxiety. “We aren’t sure of the mechanisms, but there’s a strong link between stress and dementia,” says Victoria Garfield, a genetic epidemiologist at the University of Liverpool who co-authored the paper. Research also shows that napping [supports heart health](#) and boosts [cognition](#), creativity, and memory.

Here’s how to perfect your nap to reap the benefits.

## Seize the daytime dip

It’s important to time your nap when you start getting tired but well before evening, so it won’t steal any zzzs from your overnight slumber. For most people, this Goldilocks zone is [from 1 to 4 p.m.](#) “That’s when we have a natural dip in our alertness,” says Charlene Gamaldo, professor of neurology at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

You may get more benefits from naps when they’re taken consistently—daily, if possible—and at the same time each afternoon, plus or minus 30 minutes, Gamaldo says. This way, you’re more likely to actually sleep during the nap and fall asleep again later that night, as our bodies come to expect this routine. “We’re rhythmic animals,” says [Sara Mednick](#), a sleep researcher at the University of California, Irvine. “Whenever you’re learning an activity, doing it regularly helps.” And the plusses of daily napping are cumulative for brain health, whereas any one nap has a small effect, Garfield says.

You could also time your nap before making an important choice. “Naps help us solve problems and make better decisions,” says Arianna Huffington, founder and CEO of Thrive Global and author of *The Sleep Revolution*. “They’re a tool that every leader should use when needed.”

## Find your magic window

Gamaldo recommends napping for 20-40 minutes, which can improve cognitive function and performance. It’ll be a satisfying snooze, yet it’s short enough to avoid deep sleep, which is [harder to wake from](#). She calls this length the “magic” window.

**Read More:** [\*4 Signs Your Body Is Telling You It’s Time to Take a Break\*](#)

Some [research](#) points to shorter, 15-20 minute naps. The right length may depend on your fatigue level and the [unique way](#) your brain shuts down for sleep, Garfield adds.

Mednick thinks longer daytime dozing is underrated. If you rest through the deep-sleep stage, your brain will cycle back to lighter sleep after about 60 minutes. At that point, waking up is easier, you’ll feel more rested with [better emotional control](#), and you won’t sacrifice any sleep later on. “When people regularly take longer naps, their nighttime sleep is similar to non-nappers,” Mednick says—so the extra rest is a bonus, instead of taking away from nighttime shut-eye. She suggests increasing your duration gradually over several weeks to get used to it.

## Relax before you rest

Pre-gaming your naps with [progressive muscle relaxation](#) can [improve](#) the quality of your rest. The technique involves contracting and relaxing muscles throughout the body while focusing on your breathing.

Autogenic meditation is another approach that could serve as a useful warmup to napping, Mednick says. With this type of meditation, you conjure mental images that induce peaceful feelings, such as heaviness in your limbs, aimed at [destressing the nervous system](#). “These are ways of slowing down your physiology to help you access a state that is deeply restorative,” says Mednick, who also authored [\*The Power of the Downstate\*](#).

Delphine Oudiette, a neuroscientist who researches sleep, dreams, and creativity at the [Paris Brain Institute](#), recommends experimenting over a weekend with different strategies and timeframes. “Just see if you feel regenerated or not,” she says.

## Build a nap pod

Take pride in cultivating the perfect environment for daytime rejuvenation. Many veteran nappers have a dedicated napping couch, which their bodies learn to associate with daytime sleep. Pink wears a sleep mask, earplugs, and sometimes headphones *over* the earplugs. “It’s my poor man’s [nap pod](#),” he explains. “I like the full immersion.” Gamaldo advises her patients to “simulate a cool dark cave.”

You may prefer to nap under a soft light, so your body senses it’s still daytime, potentially making the nap less intrusive on evening sleep. Most importantly, keep your ambiance consistent if possible, whether it’s your couch, car or cubicle. “You want similar cues around you each time,” Mednick says.

### **Read More:** [\*Do Less. It's Good for You\*](#)

Adam Horowitz, a [cognitive scientist](#) and visiting research fellow at Outer Coast College who focuses on sleep and dreams, plays thunderstorm recordings as an audio cue that it’s naptime, but you can learn to associate just about any soundtrack with napping.

Horowitz used to play his ukulele before sleeping, he told me—and yawned at the thought of it.

Clear your nap area of any gadgets buzzing with afternoon notifications, advises Huffington. At Thrive Global, she encourages employees to use a designated nap room.

Before putting her phone away, though, Huffington uses it to play her [Thrive Reset](#) (a tool on Thrive's platform) with photos, music, and quotes that bring calm and joy while breathing deeply. "Just 60 seconds of breathing has a dramatic effect" on reducing [fight-or-flight mode](#) while nurturing nap mode, she says.

## Caffeinate before your nap

Before napping, set yourself up for success afterward. It sounds counterintuitive, but drinking some coffee beforehand can invigorate you when you wake up (especially if combined with [zippy wake-up music](#)). Metabolizing caffeine takes about 30 minutes, the length of a nap, so your rested feeling after waking up will be amplified by the caffeine jolt, according to [some research](#). Pink takes it a step further: drinking coffee right *after* waking up, in addition to before. "I'll admit to working both sides of it," he says. (Experiment to find what works best for you: Avoid afternoon coffee if it disrupts your nighttime sleep.)

Instead of engineering an energy blast when waking up, you may want to just try to ensure you can get to sleep during the nap. Teas with ginseng, blue lotus, or mugwort may help with inducing sleepiness, Horowitz says, though the effects vary from person to person. Avoid spicy foods and sugary carbs; acid reflux and blood glucose crashes don't make for pleasant wakeups.

## Hack your creativity

New research in napping points to an old trick for creativity: Thomas Edison liked to hold a steel ball while napping. As he nodded off, the ball would fall and hit the floor. The sound woke him in a dreamy state, providing unique windows into his subconscious that sparked new ideas. Oudiette, the researcher in Paris, [studied](#) this strategy in modern-day nappers. She found that falling asleep for just 15 seconds, before the ball drop, tripled their chances of solving a math problem requiring creative insight.

### **Read More:** [Why Your Breakfast Should Start With a Vegetable](#)

But you may not need the ball trick. Just napping with an alarm set for 60 minutes or a bit longer leads to a [40% increase in creativity](#), Mednick has found. “There’s this space between wake and deep sleep where these interesting ideas are bopping around, and we can maneuver inside there,” she says. An amateur musician, Mednick was recently struggling to write a song. Just before napping, she reviewed the elements she wanted to include. After she got up, the song flowed right out.

In a study last year, Horowitz tested his own [technology](#) for nurturing sleep-related creativity. As study participants fell asleep, this device verbally prompted them to dream about trees. Post-nap, [they wrote more creative stories](#) about trees, compared to control groups. Napping opens up some helpful distance between you and the problem you’re working on, similar to gleaning insights after taking a walk or shower—but napping is “an intensified form of mind wandering,” Horowitz says. .

### **Rest to learn, and learn to rest**

Studies show that naps can [boost memory and learning](#), regardless of how often you take them. Gamaldo recommends naps when cramming for college exams. Reviewing test materials and then napping “will cement your knowledge,” she advises, especially if

you revisit the info after waking up. Naps also help with [recalling learned skills](#).

Not everyone needs to nap. Oudiette doesn't. "When I'm tired, I just like to close my eyes," she says. "It's helpful even for two minutes." The biggest thing is taking time to rest, no matter how. "You could lie down and stare at the ceiling," she says, "but you're not on your laptop or phone.

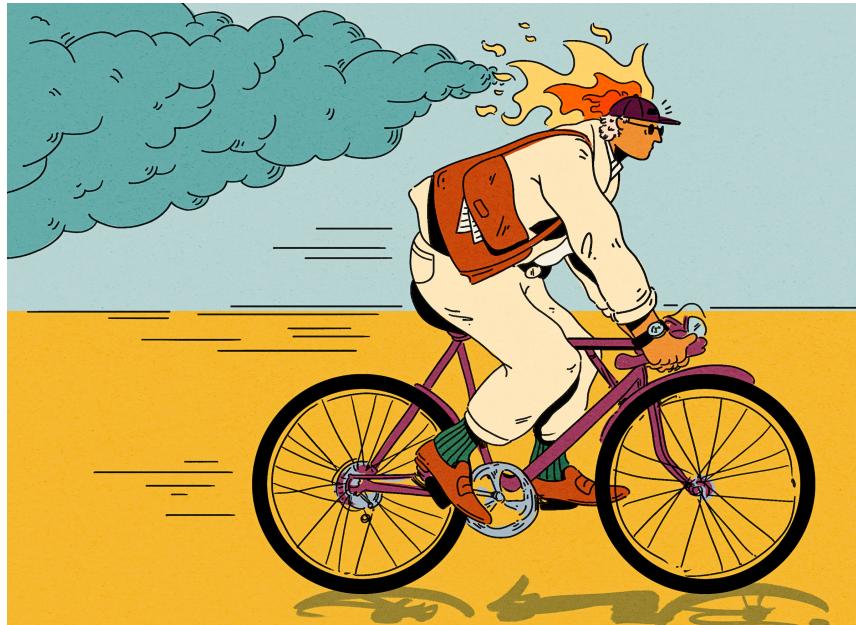
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## 4 Signs Your Body Is Telling You It's Time to Take a Break

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



If the smoke alarm in your house were beeping frantically, you'd spring into action. If your car alarm started whirring loudly, you'd investigate. And if a tornado warning was issued for your neighborhood, you'd almost certainly take cover.

Yet we're not so fast, experts agree, to react to the alarm bells ringing in our own body, letting us know we need to slow down. "The problem is, we become conditioned early on to stop listening to our bodies," says Jennifer King, an assistant professor of applied social sciences and assistant director of the Center on Trauma and Adversity at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. That means we might miss important signs that manifest when we're navigating prolonged, repetitive, or unpredictable stress—the kind that [affects many of us](#). "A cascade of changes happen in the body when the stress response is activated in a sustained way," King

says. “When the dose is too big, and there’s not a clear beginning or end, that causes wear and tear on the body.”

That’s why it’s so essential to pay close attention to changes in how we relate to others, what we’re experiencing physically, and how we’re coping mentally and emotionally—and to be open to feedback from the people around us. We asked experts to explain what to look and listen for, plus what happens if we ignore what we find instead of addressing it.

## You’ll notice emotional changes

If you haven’t taken a break—and need one—you might notice you feel gloomier than usual and are experiencing increased anxiety. “Your mood can absolutely be affected,” says Dr. Gerda Maissel, a physician in New York’s Hudson Valley who works as a [patient advocate](#) and helps people navigate the health-care system. Your thoughts might start “circling,” or whirling around on repeat in a loop. And you’ll likely “feel like you can’t remember things, or you can’t find the name for something,” she says.

### **Read More:** [\*Do Less. It’s Good for You\*](#)

Meanwhile, stress can deter you from enjoying activities you once relished. Haven’t opened a book you’d been looking forward to? No longer interested in that half-finished knitting project? Consider it a hint that something is off. People who desperately need a break sometimes also lose the ability to engage in basic self-care like exercise and eating well, Maissel says.

You might feel engulfed, too, by a sense of overwhelm. Maisel has noticed that people with chronic stress are often unable to cope well—with issues big and small. “I call it tipping,” she says. “If you’re like a plank on a seesaw, and you’ve got stuff weighing you down and you’re trying to keep everything in balance, eventually a lot of things will slide down with you.” The people she works with

get tearful, have outbursts, and can't make simple decisions because they're so overwhelmed.

## Your relationships will strain

Have you noticed you're experiencing new stress in your relationships with various people? Maybe you're grumpier than usual—and snapping at your colleagues or blasting your horn at that guy who cut you off on the freeway. "You might notice you're feeling a little more irritable or cranky," King says. "If you're finding that you want to isolate a little more, and keep to yourself—if that's something you weren't already doing—that can be because of stress." If a friend or family member approaches you about your mood, try not to get defensive or brush off their concern. Often, other people are the first to notice the warning signs.

## You might catch a cold

Stress can affect all of the body's systems, says Ashley Fields, a therapist in Indianapolis who specializes in women's issues and perinatal mental health. Research suggests it can [weaken the immune system](#), for example, causing you to get sick more frequently. "I have grad students I teach who often tell me that right after they graduate, they get a cold or some type of sickness," says Fields, who teaches masters-level social work at Indiana University—Purdue University Indianapolis. "It's almost like their bodies finally stop running at high alert with classes and work and internships, and need to heal."

## Your stomach and sleep will suffer

You might also experience digestive difficulties—like an upset stomach, constipation, or indigestion—as well as appetite changes that cause you to gain or lose weight. Stress often causes muscle

tension, Fields says, triggering headaches, jaw pain, and back and shoulder pain. We don't always realize how much tension we're holding in our bodies until we make it a point to intentionally observe what we're feeling, and where, she adds. Your sleep might be affected, too. Feeling more tired than usual? Or maybe you're sleeping fine, but you're exhausted when you climb out of bed. Both are pretty likely cues that you need to devote more time to rest and relaxation, Fields notes.

## Long-term effects of not taking a break

When we develop "tunnel vision" and orient our lives around our daily obligations, our body starts "begging us, oftentimes, to slow down," says Dr. Christopher Thompson, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and co-director of the Center for Weight Management and Wellness at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Ignoring those pleas leads to "a lot of our modern health problems."

### **Read More:** [\*How to Get Real Rest\*](#)

To understand why, consider that when we see a threat, we enter fight-or-flight mode, and our adrenal glands start releasing cortisol and adrenaline. That cortisol causes your body's tissues to release glucose into your blood, "because you need glucose to get energy to run away or fight," Thompson says. Meanwhile, your [insulin production](#) will decrease and your [blood vessels](#) will tighten, which is OK for one short-term event, like if you're in an emergency situation and need to defend yourself. But when we experience it for weeks, months, or even years without relief, "we don't recover from those cortisol spikes," which become the norm. "It's clearly really hurting our health."

[Research suggests](#), for example, that chronic stress is associated with high blood pressure, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and arthritis. Another potential effect: weight gain. Because cortisol can

increase blood sugar and impact the body's insulin level, it can lead to belly fat as well as other weight gain, Thompson says. It can also break down muscle tissue, which lowers your metabolism. "It makes sense that chronically elevated cortisol levels are causing a lot of problems, including obesity, increased weight, hypertension, insulin resistance, and diabetes," Thompson says. Exactly how long it takes for lingering stress to exact this toll will vary from person to person, he adds: "The problem is how long it takes us to recognize we're in that period of stress."

## A break doesn't have to be a vacation

Make it a point to check in with yourself every day about how you're feeling and what you need, Fields advises. Thirty seconds will suffice; the important thing is to make it part of your routine. "It's a pulse on how you're doing," she says—and you'll collect information that can help you make meaningful lifestyle changes.

If you realize your body is pushing you toward a break, don't let the idea create even more stress. You don't necessarily need to take a week off work, or submit a request for a sabbatical. Claiming just a few minutes of downtime throughout the day can make a difference, Fields says: Shut your phone off for 5 minutes, draw in an adult coloring book, or call someone you love. She likes to do a quick intentional breathing exercise: Breathe in for three to five counts, and then exhale for the same number.

### **Read More:** [\*How to Get Back to Sleep After Waking Up at Night\*](#)

Maissel likes to take short breaks throughout the day, usually centered around movement: She aims to climb 20 flights of stairs daily. She might step away from her computer, for example, to go upstairs to water a plant, which helps keep stress at bay.

"Instead of saving up for this big dose of calm and relaxation, think about how you can strategically and intentionally pepper breaks

throughout your day,” King says. “When you wake up, or you’re heading to work or school, or you’re in transition, what are the things you could be doing that allow your spikes to come back down?”

Whatever you do, she says, it needs to be something you find pleasurable or fun. For King, that means squeezing in one-song dance parties throughout the day. She pops up in her office and starts bouncing and shaking. Taking a brief respite “allows your body to metabolize some of what you’ve been taking in,” she says. “We’re soothing or energizing or offering ourselves whatever we might need to come back down to baseline, and to feel ready for whatever’s coming next.”

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## How to Have the Best-Ever At-Home Spa Day



Face it: you could use a day to yourself. But if you can't swing a whole one, how about half? What about an hour? Any amount of time works for a DIY spa day: a completely customizable way to de-stress. You don't even need to leave your house.

“The key to an at-home spa day idea is being intentional about unwinding,” says Whitney Crawford, a social worker at Thriveworks in Grand Prairie, Texas, who specializes in stress and anxiety. Doing so can release dopamine, the “feel-good” hormone that boosts mood, confidence, motivation, and energy.

It’s also a way to prioritize yourself, something that Crawford says many of her patients, especially women, don’t always do. Too often, she says, they feel shame both about feeling stressed and taking time to relax.

“Self-care is not a dirty word,” says Dr. Françoise Adan, a psychiatrist and chief whole health and well-being officer at University Hospitals Health System in Cleveland. “It’s actually a discipline if we want to bring the best of ourselves to the world.”

**Research** suggests that engaging in self-care can improve a person's well-being and lower their risk of illness. And doing a home spa day is a good way to kick off a regular self-care practice, Adan says. She suggests bringing "little moments" that you've learned from the experience into your daily life.

An at-home spa day is an invitation to take care of yourself, she adds. How you choose to personalize yours is up to you, but experts shared some ideas for creating a relaxing experience.

## **How to create a relaxing at-home spa experience**

Home is a comforting space, so there's no better place to relax, says Rachel Lozina, a licensed esthetician and founder of Blue Water Spa in Oyster Bay, New York. Doing a spa day at home is also less expensive than visiting a local spa.

Plus, you're in control, and there's no one-size-fits-all prescription, Crawford says. Choose the activities that you enjoy most and that will help you relax. Here are some ideas:

### **Set realistic expectations**

"De-stressing can be stressful" for some, Adan notes. It's crucial to set realistic intentions and expectations for the time and not obsess over perfection.

Don't try to do too many activities, Crawford emphasizes. She recommends choosing one or two that you enjoy most.

**Read More:** *You're Vacationing All Wrong. Here's How to Have a Truly Restful Break*

You also don't have to devote a full day to it, if you don't have the time. An hour or two will be just as beneficial, she says.

## Create ambiance

Start by setting your phone to “do not disturb” mode, Lozina says. If you can, she suggests sending your spouse, children, or roommates out for the duration of your session. “Dim the lights, put on some very soft relaxing music, and light candles,” Lozina adds.

Flowers or essential oils are a nice touch, too, Adan says. Aromatherapy—lavender, citrus, and rose scents, in particular—has been shown to reduce anxiety, especially in patients awaiting medical procedures, according to a 2020 [research review](#).

## Have a long shower or soak

Soaking in a warm tub can help melt away stress. A small [study](#) found that “whole-body immersion bathing”—which means plunging your body up to your neck into warm water—increased blood flow and helped people feel refreshed.

If baths aren’t your thing, take a long, hot shower, Lozina says. Make it extra exhilarating by exfoliating with a gentle scrub, using a hair mask, and dabbing some eucalyptus oil around your shower.

## Give yourself a facial

Applying a face mask can improve circulation, boost the skin’s hydration, and provide gentle exfoliation, “all leading to softer skin that glows,” says Dr. Elizabeth Geddes-Bruce, a dermatologist at Westlake Dermatology in Austin.

But the benefits go beyond your appearance. “The skin on your face is full of neuroreceptors that take feedback from physical stimulation and send signals to your brain telling you to relax,” she says.

**Read More:** [\*How to Share a Bed While Getting the Best Night's Sleep\*](#)

If you're purchasing a mask, Geddes-Bruce suggests looking for products that target a skin issue that you hope to improve, such as moisturizing or brightening. You can also make masks and scrubs at home using avocado, honey, oatmeal, and yogurt, she says. Avoid harsh acids, like lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, which could burn the skin.

## Practice breathing and meditation

[Meditation can be intimidating](#). People often think it's about completely quieting the mind, Adan says, but it's really about training the mind to be less reactive to thoughts.

Mindfulness is one way to practice meditation, and there are many YouTube videos and [apps](#) to help you get started. A [review of studies](#) found that practicing mindfulness-based therapy helped reduce stress, anxiety, and depression.

Breathing exercises are another way to relax by keeping your mind focused on counting, Adan says. She recommends 4-2-6 breathing, where you inhale for a count of four, hold for two counts, exhale for six, and repeat.

Another technique is square breathing, where you inhale for four seconds, hold it for four seconds, exhale for four, hold the breath out for four, and repeat, Crawford says.

With any meditation or breathing method, start small, maybe just 30 seconds or a minute, and then progress, she says.

## Try self-massage

Gently massaging your hands, feet, head, or back of your neck can relieve pressure and help you de-stress, Adan says. Just don't apply too much pressure.

"It should be nice and relaxing and comfortable," she says. "Just listen to your body."

**Read More:** *4 Signs Your Body Is Telling You It's Time to Take a Break*

Use your hands or tools like a tennis ball or foam roller, Adan says. Lozina suggests trying a massage gun or other type of massager.

## Incorporate anything else that relaxes you

Your at-home spa day doesn't necessarily require traditional spa activities. Lozina suggests doing any activity that helps you relax.

"Read a book or start journaling—all of these will help your mind and body relax," she says. Drawing, coloring, or even cooking are other relaxing activities to consider, Crawford adds.

Whatever you choose, savor each step. "Relax and enjoy the whole process," Geddes-Bruce says. "It's all intentional, and it's all about you."

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## You're Vacationing All Wrong. Here's How to Have a Truly Restful Break



Travel [can do wonders](#) for your well-being. “Experiencing awe, going to novel places, engaging your creative mind, being in nature, and spending time with family and friends are all things that we know can increase well-being and even reduce stress,” says Stephanie Preston, a professor of psychology at the University of Michigan.

But those perks aren’t a given. As anyone who’s dealt with intrusive work emails or an overly ambitious itinerary can attest, it’s possible to arrive back home from a trip feeling more stressed than you were before you left.

Keeping certain tips in mind as you plan and set out will help you better reap the benefits of travel.

**Take a few short trips instead of one long one**

Because the positive effects of traveling fade about [a month](#) after you return home—and because [the planning process](#) can make you happier than the trip itself—traveling more often could be key to improving mental health, says Laurence Chan, instructor of medical psychology at Columbia University. That means taking a few smaller trips may be better than taking one big trip, he says.

It may also be easier to fit into a busy life. “If someone is taking a longer vacation, there could also be a logistical limitation to disconnecting, and someone could be more likely to engage in work spillover tasks—like attending a ‘can’t-miss’ meeting or conference call,” he says.

## **Temporarily delete or mute apps**

It’s hard, but put your phone away as much as possible—and consider deleting your work email app or social media apps while you’re gone. One [2016 study](#) linked spending less time on one’s phone to a more relaxing vacation.

“I think social media in general is hard to disconnect from,” says Dr. Paul Nestadt, a psychiatrist and director of the Johns Hopkins Anxiety Disorders Clinic. “It can be anxiety-provoking to keep doomscrolling.” He adds that some of his patients actually feel more anxiety from disconnecting entirely, so be mindful of your personality and what suits you best.

If you’re particularly addicted to your phone, Preston recommends choosing a vacation destination that has limited internet access, such as a camping spot in the mountains.

## **Have a loose plan**

If you’re aiming for a relaxing getaway, you shouldn’t overschedule yourself. But don’t underschedule yourself either, says Henley Vazquez, co-founder of the travel agency Fora.

“There can be the impulse to figure it out when you’re there,” she says. But faced with an empty agenda, “we end up defaulting to checking our phones.”

Vazquez says a good rule of thumb is to plan a half-day’s worth of activities every day. Consider also preparing a list of restaurants you’d like to try in advance so you don’t succumb to stressfully surfing Yelp from your hotel room.

## **Put down your camera**

While it might be tempting to take photos throughout your trip, consider occasionally leaving your camera or phone in your bag and simply enjoying the present moment. “I think it has become almost an impulse to experience your own trip through your social sharing rather than to just experience it on the ground,” Vazquez says.

Instead of snapping photos for Instagram, work on savoring your scenic hike, relaxing boat ride, or joy-filled family dinner. “No matter which activities you engage in, I think it’s important to do them fully,” Chan says. “If you’re going to be walking, just walk. If you’re going to be exploring the sites, just take them in.”

## **Work ahead**

It might seem like a counterintuitive way to tamp down stress, but try to do extra work before you leave for your trip, Nestadt says. If you don’t, you risk feeling even more overwhelmed when you return home. “That can kind of delete or overwrite the beneficial effects you would’ve had from the trip,” he says.

## **Cut your trip a day short**

Even though you might dream of spending 10 days sunbathing and swimming in Hawaii, nine would be better if it means you have a day of rest and recovery between your vacation and returning to work or school.

“If part of the reason you’re taking the vacation is because you need a break, then building a buffer [day] in really allows the recuperation that you’re able to achieve on vacation to last,” Nestadt says. An extra day at home is especially helpful if your trip involves jet lag, Preston adds.

## Go for a hike or swim

[One study](#) found that when people exercise on vacation—regardless of whether they do at home—they had improved sleep, heart rates, and well-being. Although a run on the hotel gym’s treadmill is good, it’s even better to break a sweat in nature, as [exercising outdoors](#) can lower anxiety and stress.

## Choose a sun-drenched spot

Regular exposure to sunlight has countless benefits for physical and mental health. It can improve sleep, strengthen the immune system, release mood-boosting serotonin, increase vitamin D stores, and lower blood pressure. [One study](#) found that people experienced more health benefits from their vacation when they were in a sunny locale rather than an overcast one. If you’re torn between Seattle and San Diego for your next jaunt, for example, you might feel happier and more relaxed if you choose the latter.

## Consider your travel companions

You might think traveling with anyone will be fun—a vacation is a vacation, right? Wrong. [One study](#) found that who we travel with greatly impacts how much we enjoy our trip. (Out of traveling

alone or with someone's friends, partner, relatives, or colleagues, people enjoyed traveling with their colleagues the least.)

One reason: You might want to rise and shine for a morning hike, for instance, whereas your brother-in-law might want to sleep in and zone out at the beach. "There can be a lot of interpersonal conflict over how you manage the schedule and the priorities," Preston says.

To truly recharge, think very carefully about how well your vacation desires will mesh with those of your travel companions.

## **Tap your friends for advice**

Googling the best restaurants in Mexico City could lead you down a three-hour rabbit hole of research. Instead, consider asking for food recommendations only from your friend who went there a few months ago. "Crowdsource advice from friends who have been places, and they'll tell you the restaurants to go to or the hikes that were spectacular, and that can save a lot of time," Preston says.

## **Pack with compression cubes**

Packing is personal, Vazquez says. Some people carefully plan their outfits, while others toss a hodgepodge of items into their suitcase and figure it out later. Regardless of your style, she recommends using compression packing cubes to condense your items and serve as portable drawers, keeping you organized while you're away. "I cannot overemphasize what a game changer these were for me when I found them," she says. They're particularly useful for people traveling with kids, as you can pack each family member's items in a different compression bag.

## **Eliminate layovers if you can**

You might not be able to avoid layovers if you're traveling somewhere far away, or if your budget doesn't allow for a nonstop flight. But it's ideal to take direct flights and streamline travel if you can. Flight connections can be stressful, especially if you're traveling internationally, have a short layover time, or if one leg of your flight is delayed.

If you're spending significant time getting to and from your destination, you might not return feeling like you had a truly restful trip, Vazquez says. "You might have even added to your anxiety by making a large portion of your time away dedicated to complicated travel arrangements," she says.

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## How People Relax Around the World



It's no secret that Americans are among the most [stressed-out people in the world](#), prone to overwork and spending what little free time we have on performance-based hobbies.

"Americans do not have a great relationship with relaxation," says Iris Mauss, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. Even though we are aware of the need for downtime, she says, we just can't seem to escape the hustle culture that tells us we must earn any downtime we take. "People here define themselves by their work and activity."

While Americans are burning the candle at both ends, many other cultures have no problem making time for a little R&R each day. Here are 7 relaxation rituals from around the world—and why they might be worth a try.

### Forest bathing in Japan

Taking a regular walk in the woods is more than a hobby in Japan. It's a form of preventative medicine called *shinrin-yoku*, credited

with improving sleep quality, mood, and immunity.

Forest bathing researcher Dr. Qing Li, associate professor at the Nippon Medical School in Tokyo and author of *Forest Bathing: How Trees Can Help You Find Health and Happiness*, says that [this practice works](#) by opening our five senses to the natural world, soothing our nervous and endocrine systems. What's more, breathing in [phytoncides](#), or organic compounds released from plants, delivers antimicrobial benefits and has been shown to stimulate a type of disease-fighting white blood cell.

## Self-massage in India

For many generations in India, a daily pre-shower massage with oil was standard to start the day feeling alert, calm, and focused, says Zubinji Billimoria, a Los Angeles-based certified practitioner of Ayurveda, an ancient Indian system of medicine. While most of us find it difficult to commit to anything before 6:30 a.m., [research](#) has shown that a massage practice at this time pays dividends in stress reduction when done regularly, even if it's just once a week. You're helping to counteract the stimulating modern lifestyle of cell phones, TV, and video games that makes people anxious, impatient, and unable to focus or sleep, while also supporting the body's natural circadian rhythm, or biological clock, Billimoria says.

### **Read More:** [Do Less. It's Good for You](#)

To start, massage oil down your head, neck, shoulders, arms, and back, before circling in a clockwise motion on your chest, down the sides of your legs, and up the insides, ending up at the belly, rubbing again in a clockwise motion. Leave the oil on for at least 30 minutes, and then shower.

## Sauna culture in Finland

Saunas may be relegated to spa days in the U.S., but in Finland—the happiest country in the world seven times in a row, according to the [World Happiness Report](#)—they are a weekly ritual and part of the nation's cultural DNA. Sauna is so ingrained in Finnish society that it's recognized by UNESCO's [list](#) of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and celebrated in Finnish songs, beliefs, and folklore. About 90% of Finns go to a public sauna at least once a week, [according to](#) the Finnish Heritage Agency. Health benefits of sweating in a sauna's dry heat include improvements in blood pressure, reduced incidence of cardiovascular disease and dementia, and increased endorphins, according to a [review study](#) in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*. To reap these benefits, sit in the heat for five to 20 minutes at a time, alternating with a cooling swim, shower, or break outside.

## ***Temazcal ceremonies in Mexico***

In temazcal rituals, an ancient practice of Indigenous cultures in both North and South America, sweating is more than just relaxation or pain relief. It's a sacred practice led by a trained healer—a sort of therapy. Held inside a beehive-shaped mud or stone lodge, participants sweat as hot lava stones are covered with water and herbs and the guide leads them through a meditation with drums, flutes, and chanting, helping to release pent-up emotions, says Roselia Flandes, spa director at the Conrad Punta Mita in Riviera Nayarit, which organizes temazcal ceremonies for guests.

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“It’s like a church, but it’s not religion,” says Marili Samayoa Monzon, a medicine woman who leads ceremonies at her practice in Los Cabos, Mexico, as well as the One&Only Palmilla and White Lodge. Monzon says the heat forces people to turn inward and often brings up memories and emotions that she is trained to help participants process. Growing in popularity, she says, wellness

enthusiasts often come back monthly or even weekly to her temazcal to ease physical and mental distress.

## ***Friluftsliv* in Norway**

Norwegians enjoy spending time in nature in all kinds of weather, a concept known as *friluftsliv*. This term means appreciating and connecting with nature, whether snowshoeing through a thick blanket of snow or strolling through a field of spring wildflowers. Spending time in nature has been shown to lower blood pressure and improve mental well-being. A 2019 [meta-analysis](#) of 84 previous studies found that immersive nature experiences delivered clear benefits to self-esteem, self-efficacy, resilience, and academic and cognitive performance.

“The relationship between nature connectedness and happiness appears to be positive and significant,” says study author Colin Capaldi, an epidemiologist at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

## ***Il Dolce Far Niente*—or “the sweetness of doing nothing”—in Italy**

Italians have seemingly perfected the art of balanced living, taking time each day to savor life’s simple pleasures. Whether it’s lingering over an *aperitivo* at an outdoor café, enjoying a leisurely meal with family or friends, or just basking in the sunshine, Italians prioritize leisure and living each day to the fullest, says Massimo Braglia, a Bologna native who blogs about Italian culture and language at the [Italian Way of Life](#).

**Read More:** [4 Signs Your Body Is Telling You It’s Time to Take a Break](#)

One of his most enjoyable days in recent memory was spending an entire day with his brother in Bologna, just sitting outside people-

watching.

## Siesta in Spain

A little over a decade ago, it looked like Spain's beloved ritual of an afternoon nap after lunch would be abolished to align work days and productivity with the rest of Europe. It didn't happen. In fact, as climate change boosted temperatures across Europe last year, more people reportedly embraced the siesta to escape the heat plaguing the city midday.

There's good reason to consider a post-lunch snooze. One [University of London](#) study found that taking a short daytime nap delays the brain shrinkage that comes with aging. Another study from researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, found that taking an hour-long nap helped improve students' ability to learn and perform better on tests.

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## Horizon Is More a Tribute to Great Westerns Than a Great One Itself

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.



Every time a filmmaker or showrunner takes a gamble on a [big Western](#), a million journalists and critics start tippyety-typing about how “The Western is back!” or “The Western never went away!” or “[The Western is the genre we need now!](#)” or even just—apropos of the enormous popularity of [Yellowstone](#)—“At last the ‘older’ audience gets the Western it craves and deserves!” It will be easy for those writers to apply most of those truisms, if not all of them, to [Kevin Costner’s \*Horizon: An American Saga\*](#), an ambitious four-part epic about white people pushing into the west—and, with barely a moral qualm, taking for themselves land that had been inhabited by indigenous people for thousands of years. The first three-hour chunk of *Horizon*, conveniently called *Chapter 1*, premiered out of competition at the Cannes Film Festival on Sunday evening, with its creator, star, and chief risk taker, Kevin Costner, in attendance. The film—and let’s call it a film, although it appears to have been structured to be amenable to [smaller, television-episode-sized bites](#)—played well to an international

crowd, and Costner was visibly moved by their enthusiastic and affectionate response.

Only a truly churlish person would want to deny Costner this moment of glory: he has nurtured this idea for more than 30 years, and he's spent roughly \$20 million of his own money just to get it going. (*Chapter 1* will open in North American theaters on June 28, with *Chapter 2* following in August. There are no release dates for the remaining two chapters.) Costner hasn't always been the greatest actor, but he's always been a handsome, appealing figure, the kind of performer who gives the appearance of handling stardom with an easy shrug. And in recent years, his performances have become more energized—his silver-fox gravitas has a bit of kick to it. (He was terrific in the 2020 western thriller *Let Him Go*, as a retired sheriff who sets out to rescue his young grandson from a creepy, backwards clan.) As Hayes Ellison in *Chapter 1* of *Horizon*, he's less a star than an anchoring presence. When he finally rides into the movie, about an hour in—and after a deadly protracted battle between Apaches and white settlers—you feel the movie can begin in earnest. Hayes is laconic, wary; he's suffered in life, though we don't yet know how. His costumes also have the best color scheme, consisting mostly of soft, tonal smokey blues, and he gets the best bandana: while the other guys wear rough cotton things tied any old which way, Hayes's scarf is supple, delicately printed, artfully draped—*somebody's* got to bring a little sprezzatura to the frontier.

But overall, *Horizon* comes trotting at us a little too gently. Westerns don't need a special reason to exist, at least if you ask me: the genre is as sturdy and rich as the action movie, the romantic comedy, the crime thriller. There's a lot that a creative, devoted filmmaker can do with just the classic framework. But *Horizon*—while being at least somewhat culturally sensitive, handsome to look at, and reasonably engaging—still comes off as curiously undistinguished. It's so tasteful, so careful, so eager not to upset or

offend, that it reflects little sense of risk. *Horizon: Chapter 1* feels deeply conservative in the cultural sense; it has no reason to exist other than to remind us how great the great Westerns are, without (thus far, at least) actually being great itself.

That's ironic considering how high the stakes are for Costner, and you can't look at *Horizon* and deduce that he doesn't care. If anything, he cares too much. He and cowriter Jon Baird have come up with a complicated plot, filled with characters who churn around one another, sometimes doing little more than taking up space. Some of the action is set in Arizona's San Pedro Valley, where a group of settlers have staked their future on a new town called Horizon. Now and then, it shifts to Montana Territory, where a separate group of pioneers trundle across the landscape in their covered wagons, carefully husbanding their supply of fresh water, a precious resource.



In the town of Horizon, a few shaky structures have gone up; the inhabitants have gathered in one of them for a dance, which is where we first see young matriarch Frances Kittredge (Sienna Miller, giving the finest, most believable performance in the movie) urging her young teenage son Nate (Hayes Costner, son of Kevin) to dance with her. He refuses, and she gently ribs him for being too embarrassed to take a spin with his mother. But the little family has barely reached their homestead when a group of angry Native Americans launch an attack. Frances and her teenage daughter

Lizzie (Georgia MacPhail) survive, but they're among a relatively lucky few. The United States Cavalry arrives eventually to help pick up the pieces; one of their numbers is a soulful young first lieutenant played by Sam Worthington. He passes his officer's coat along to Frances, who, strong as she is, is also obviously riven with grief. If you catch a future romance sparking, you wouldn't be wrong.

Elsewhere, in Montana Territory, a character played by Jena Malone (later we'll learn her name is Ellen) shoots a guy and runs off with a baby, the sort of event that causes legions of note-taking critics to scribble things like "take baby why?" in their notebooks. Why, indeed? It turns out plenty of other people want that baby too, including Dale Dickey's rough-mannered Mrs. Sykes and her scruffy offspring (played by Jamie Campbell Bower and Jon Beavers). Other characters and plot points pile up quickly: Saucy entrepreneur Marigold (Abbey Lee) takes care of Ellen's purloined baby by day (he's now almost a toddler) and by night entertains visiting menfolk in the bedroom. When she sees Costner's Hayes ride in, her eyes widen appreciatively. At a certain point, there will be tender, tasteful dry-humping.

Unsurprisingly, considering Costner was also the writer-director-star of *Dances with Wolves*, which tried to correct decades' worth of damaging depictions of Indigenous Americans, *Horizon* is resolute in the way it deals with the "Nice land, think we'll take it!" school of property acquisition. The Natives' dilemma—they'd rather not fight the white people if they can help it, but how else can they keep their tribal land?—is represented largely by the actions of two Apache brothers, Pionsenay (Owen Crow Shoe) and Taklishim (Tatanka Means), who feel violence is their only recourse to defend their home and their people. Still, none of the Native characters are fleshed out as fully as they might be. Will their stories emerge in the coming installments? For now, we have to give Costner the benefit of the doubt. Meanwhile, in the name of

sensitivity, *Horizon* twists itself into some historically inaccurate pretzel shapes: Worthingon's First Lieutenant Trent Gephhardt, a guy who sees exactly what's happening and knows why it's wrong, refers to the Natives repeatedly as "the Indigenous." That's a word very few of America's white forbears would have used; lots of things might have turned out differently if they had.



But then, *Horizon* is striving for lots of things, including visual majesty, dramatic excitement, some sense of atonement for injustices that are essentially unforgivable. But mostly, it's a Western in love with Westerns. John Debney's score shoots for pure Elmer Bernstein-style grandeur—but it also feels like a facsimile, a copy of a copy that has lost some of its crispness. And though that attack on the Kittredges' homestead is beautifully blocked and shot, as well as harrowing, it still frames the Apaches as ruthless, faceless invaders. Costner, it seems, wants to have it both ways: to help us understand why Native populations would be forced to defend their land, even as he's essentially presenting them as "the other." His storytelling is missing a few beats here.

And there's another overarching problem. *Horizon* doesn't come close to the unsparing emotional toughness of many of the 1950s Westerns by the likes of John Ford, Anthony Mann, and Budd Boetticher, or, for that matter, the later works of their Italian spiritual brethren, the double Sergio Leone and Corbucci. The greatest of those 1950s Westerns were brazen in addressing the

feelings of helplessness that can plague the most ultra-masculine men. And those directors knew plenty about toxic masculinity long before the term was even coined. In Anthony Mann's great 1958 Western *Man of the West*, a saloon singer played by Julie London is raped and beaten by outlaws—the events aren't depicted, but Mann makes us feel the horror of them even so. The woman's suffering isn't just a dramatic device; it's a source of anguish for the movie's hero, played by Gary Cooper, and for Mann himself.

*Horizon* is just getting started, but you can't imagine Costner even daring to tread into territory like that—complex *human* territory, as opposed to just genre territory. Maybe he'll push further in subsequent chapters. But for now, he's just paying respectful homage. No matter how great he looks while doing it, it's still not nearly enough.

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## **‘This Is a Film About the Women’s Resistance.’ What Bread & Roses Reveals About the Feminist Fight Against the Taliban**

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.



When [Kabul](#) fell to the Taliban, returning the country to the fundamentalist group’s control after two transformative decades, scores of Afghan women were compelled to flee. Those who remained faced a reality in which they could no longer be who they are: journalists deleted evidence of their work, artists destroyed their creations, and graduates set fire to their degrees.

While the Taliban forced many Afghan women to abandon their workplaces and universities, some chose to fight back. Their defiance, and the dangers that have come with it, are vividly captured in *Bread and Roses*, a documentary that follows three women in real time as their lives become undone by the Taliban’s return. There’s Zahra Mohammadi, 33, a newly-wed dentist whose practice quickly transforms into a meeting space for fellow activists. There’s Tarafom Seyed, 39, a women’s rights activist

who is forced into exile in neighboring Pakistan. And there's Sharifa Movahidzadeh, 31, a government employee who is now confined to her home. The film, which premiered last year at the Cannes Film Festival, is set to be released by Apple on June 21.

More than just a story about the brutality of the [Taliban](#), *Bread and Roses* is "about the women's resistance in Afghanistan," [Jennifer Lawrence](#), the Oscar-winning actor and producer of the film, tells TIME in a recent interview alongside award-winning Afghan filmmaker Sahra Mani, who directed the film, and Pakistani education activist [Malala Yousafzai](#), who served as its executive producer. Ahead of the film's wider release, the three women discuss how the project came together, the fate of its three protagonists, and what impact they hope the film will have on a world whose attention has been largely drawn elsewhere.

*This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.*

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## **TIME: To start, can you talk about how this project came together?**

Sahra Mani: When the Taliban took over the country in 2021, we saw them impose a lot of restrictions on women's education, women's movement. And later on, we saw extrajudicial killing, kidnapping, illegal detention, and a lot of women disappearing. I was witnessing everything happening and, as a filmmaker, I was thinking: what can I do? It was my goal to make a film about this situation and I was very lucky that Jennifer and Justine [Ciarrocchi] wrote an email telling me that if I want to make a film, they would be happy to support the project. That's how this story started.

Jennifer Lawrence: When Kabul fell, I like the rest of the world was watching from the news and was devastated and desperate to get inside Afghanistan. And so Justine and I tried to look for an

Afghan filmmaker, which was how we came to see *A Thousand Girls Like Me*, which was a stunning documentary by Sahra. So we reached out to Sahra, who was already collecting footage, to just try to support her as much as we could.

**One of the most striking things about the film is that it gives viewers a first-person window into life under Taliban rule. How did you manage to do it?**

Mani: Because I was not inside Afghanistan, it was a bit challenging in the beginning. [Mani was attending a film festival in Europe when Kabul fell, and has lived in exile ever since.] I managed luckily to train a camerawoman and a cameraman who were still left behind because so many film crews left the country. I focused on a dozen women who were willing to share their life with us and I trained them how to film themselves. We ended up with three characters in the film because somehow we decided to focus on young women, my age or maybe younger, to see how this situation affected them as modern women who were ready to contribute their talent to society but had to be in prison inside the home.

Malala Yousafzai: Afghanistan right now is the only country in the world that bans adolescent girls from completing their education and bans women from work and university education. All the Afghan women and experts are calling out that this is a gender apartheid that the women in Afghanistan are witnessing right now. I think there's nothing more powerful right now than Afghan women and girls sharing their stories in their own voice. And this documentary is that platform for them.

**What drew you all to these three women—Zahra Mohammadi, Taranom Seyedi, and Sharifa Movahidzadeh—in particular?**

Mani: For me, these three women, their story is not unique, but [it's] also important because it's a story of a hundred and a thousand and a million other women under the dictatorship of the Taliban. Because the three of them belonged to three different categories of society, I thought each of them can represent their own category and their own field of work. That's why I selected them.

**What was the process of getting the footage from them? I imagine that, in such a dangerous environment, it couldn't have been easy.**

Mani: I trained them how to take the camera, how to make a frame, how to send me the footage, and, after they sent me the footage, how to clean the camera of their video. If they're arrested, I didn't want everyone to know that they're involved in filming. And then I trained one camerawoman and one cameraman. I stayed on the border of Afghanistan for some time to be able to get the hard drive. I watched the video that the women took and then we would take and I'd [ask] them to correct the framing or the voice or whatever. I think they did a great job, and I really appreciate all those women who shared their lives and the really genius way they found out that this is a way we could raise our voice.

**Malala, you understand better than most—having faced the Taliban in your native Pakistan—the situation that Afghan women and girls find themselves in today. What risks come with taking a stand like this?**

Yousafzai: I could fully understand how brave these women were, that they took their phones and started recording their lives under the Taliban. What I went through in Swat Valley from 2007 to

2009, in a small part of Pakistan, is very similar to what Afghan women have witnessed, but for a very long time and not just once, but twice. Afghanistan fell to the Taliban back in the late 1990s as well and, around 2001, people were hoping that things were changing. Women who are in their 20s, who were still young, for them that was a story of the past. They were hoping that Afghanistan would be a much better country for women where they could go to school, they could go to work, they could be part of their political parties and their governments, which was the case.

Afghanistan had changed significantly in the past 20 years. And when you listen to the stories of Afghan girls and women, that's what you hear—that they are so shocked that the past is repeated. But one thing which is very different this time is the resistance of Afghan women. You see it in the documentary how, each and every day, they're coming together, writing slogans on posters, and collectively—in front of the Taliban, in their faces—calling for freedom, work, and the right to education.

If you experience your life under terrorism, the only thing you wish is that it never happens again; that it stops. And this is exactly what Afghan women wish for.

**Read More:** *The Women of Afghanistan Won't Be Silenced Anymore*

I told my story because I was hoping that people will realize what it is like for a girl or for a woman to live under that. And today, when millions of Afghan women are facing this, I want the world to connect to them, to see their story closely, and to realize that this is not OK. We cannot let this happen.

**What can you tell us about the fate of the three protagonists now?**

Mani: Our three characters left Afghanistan. Most of the women I knew managed to leave to Pakistan or Iran. But there are still a lot of women inside Afghanistan who couldn't find any way to leave. Going to Pakistan or even Iran is not easy for them. They can't afford it. Being able to leave Afghanistan is a kind of privilege that not everyone has.

Lawrence: It's devastating, and I remember Malala's book resonated this feeling so well: that the Taliban comes and takes over these people's homes. Afghanistan and Pakistan, this is where these people live, this is where their families are, and the Taliban not only comes in and takes away all of their rights and their freedoms, but they steal their homes. Having to leave your own country, to leave your own family behind, in order to be safe is just a nightmare that I can't even fathom.

## **What impact do you hope this film will have ?**

Mani: Our hope is to [show the] international community that the human rights crisis in Afghanistan, it's a crisis in human rights everywhere, every corner of this world. Afghan women are really hoping that the feminist community, the women's rights community, the human community [will be] supporting them and raise their voice and don't leave them alone. From this platform, I'm calling for all artists, filmmakers, writers, activists, researchers, and women's communities to come together and to support women of Afghanistan because if we don't stand against the Taliban right now, maybe tomorrow will be too late. Because they are international terrorists and we can find them everywhere and they can go everywhere and destroy our world. And remember: Afghanistan is part of our world.

Lawrence: These women need our advocacy and they need our attention. This resistance cannot be ignored, the crisis cannot be ignored because, like Sahra said, this is our safety. Children that are

born from educated women are less likely to be manipulated into being soldiers for the Taliban. This is an international crisis.

Yousafzai: We also should support the activism led by Afghan women who are running campaigns to raise awareness and also pushing countries and world leaders to take action against the Taliban. There are legal ways to hold the Taliban to account, including the Crimes Against Humanity Treaty and other options. At the same time, we can also support alternative education and environment programs for Afghan women that are led by Afghan activists in the country and outside the country and it's so important to look around in your own country and see where those Afghan communities are and how you can help them in their activism and support the Afghan girls. I have seen how brave and strong they are.

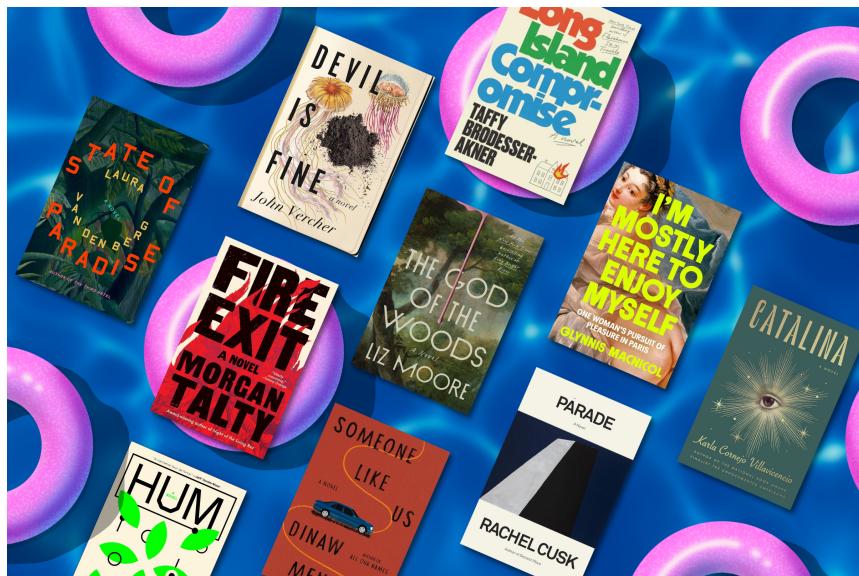
Three women have risked their lives to tell their story really powerfully to us, and they are not doing it just for themselves but they are doing it on behalf of the millions of Afghan women who may not be able to make it to the screen.

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## 24 New Books You Need to Read This Summer

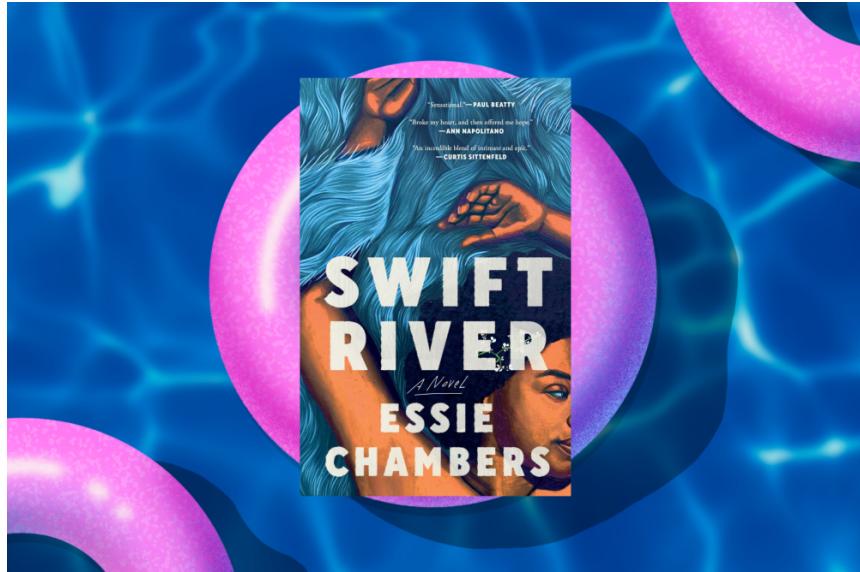


Summer is just around the corner and those looking for something to read on the beach, by the pool or even indoors are in luck. The most anticipated books of summer 2024 seem to offer something for everyone, from a heart-pounding mystery from [Rachel Howzell Hall](#) to a hip-hop history lesson from [Questlove](#).

From Memorial Day to Labor Day, you can relax with memoirs from [Dr. Anthony Fauci](#), artist Anna Marie Tendler, and the long-time assistant to the late [Joan Didion](#). Chill out with debuts from exciting up-and-comers like film producer Essie Chambers and Palestinian journalist Yasmin Zaher. Or heat things up with [Casey McQuiston](#), who is back with a romance that they call their “spiciest” book yet, and memoirist [Glynnis MacNicol](#), who shows how a few months in post-pandemic Paris helped her get her groove back.

Below, the 24 most anticipated books of the summer.

***Swift River, Essie Chambers (June 4)***



Essie Chambers' debut novel, *Swift River*, is a heartbreakingly hopeful coming-of-age story about the high cost of family secrets. In 1987, a lonely, overweight biracial teenager named Diamond Newberry struggles to make sense of her dad's mysterious disappearance seven years earlier. (The only thing they ever found were his sneakers, placed along the titular New England mill town's namesake river, with his wallet and house keys tucked inside.) While Diamond's mom fights to declare her husband legally dead in order to collect his much-needed insurance money, the 16-year-old receives a letter from a long-lost relative that has her convinced that her dad is still alive. And if that's the case, she wonders, why doesn't he want to be found?

**Buy Now:** *Swift River* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***Fire Exit, Morgan Talty (June 4)***



With his spellbinding follow-up to *Night of the Living Rez*, Morgan Talty offers a compassionate portrait of a man who is desperate to understand who he is and where he came from. A river on Maine's Penobscot Reservation is all that separates Charles Lamosway from the daughter he secretly fathered more than 20 years ago and has watched from afar since her birth. When she suddenly goes missing, Charles finds himself revisiting the most consequential events of his life—his tough childhood on the reservation, his too-short relationship with his daughter's mom, and the tragic death of his stepfather—in the hopes that he will be able to tell her the truth of his identity before it's too late.

**Buy Now:** *Fire Exit* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***The Friday Afternoon Club*, Griffin Dunne (June 11)**



Actor and director Griffin Dunne is the son of investigative journalist [Dominick Dunne](#), and the nephew of legendary writers John Gregory Dunne and [Joan Didion](#). In his debut memoir, *The Friday Afternoon Club*, he attempts to make sense of his well-known family's strange, and often tragic history and his place in it. He shares Hollywood tales about being saved from drowning by Sean Connery, trying to hook up with Janis Joplin in his teens, and forming a lifelong bond with [Carrie Fisher](#) while she filmed *Star Wars*. But it's the [1982 death of his sister, Dominique](#), at the hands of her ex-boyfriend, and the trial that followed that looms large over the book. Written with candor and heart, *The Friday Afternoon Club* is more than just a juicy celebrity autobiography, it's a loving portrait of a complicated but resilient family.

**Buy Now:** *The Friday Afternoon Club* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

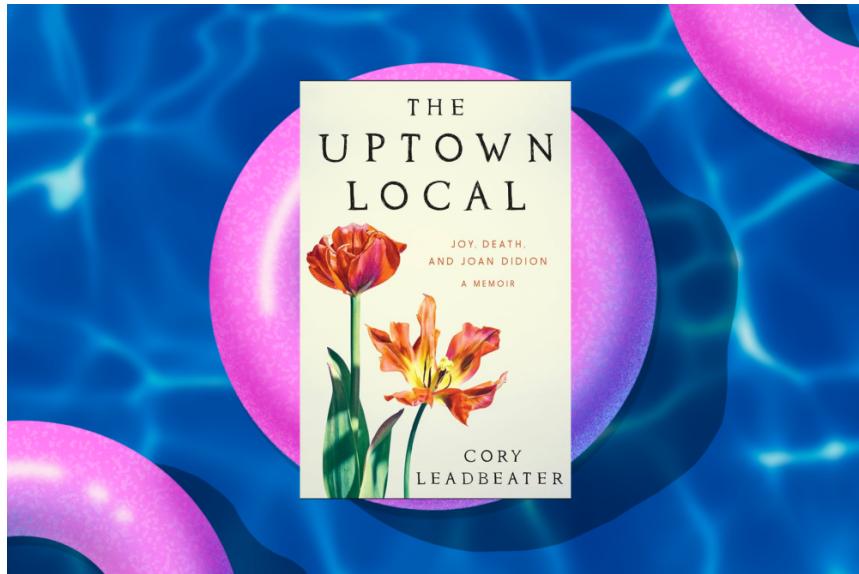
***The Sons of El Rey, Alex Espinoza (June 11)***



A family of luchadores, Mexican wrestlers known for donning vibrant masks and costumes, are the subject of *The Sons of El Rey*, Alex Espinoza's gripping novel about masculinity and migration. In present-day East Los Angeles, Mexican born-LA raised former lucha libre wrestler Freddy Vega struggles to save his dying dad Ernesto's gym. On his deathbed, Ernesto, better known as famed luchador El Rey Coyote, has visions of his late wife and his alter-ego, who force him to confront the choices he made back in 1960s Mexico City. Meanwhile, Freddy's openly gay American-born son, Julian, struggles to find a place for himself in a sport that has not always been [accepting of queer people](#). With affection and humor, *The Sons of El Rey* shows how three generations of one luchador dynasty wrestle with their demons, desires, and destinies.

**Buy Now:** *The Sons of El Rey* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***The Uptown Local, Cory Leadbeater (June 11)***



For nine years, Cory Leadbeater worked as [Joan Didion](#)'s personal assistant—but [The Devil Wears Prada](#) this is definitely not. In Leadbeater's debut memoir, *The Uptown Local*, he makes it abundantly clear that working for Didion, who died in 2021, was a dream job for a then aspiring novelist in his early twenties. He writes longingly of the revered author and the time they spent together in her final years as roommates entertaining “Oscar winners, California governors, and Supreme Court justices” in [her Manhattan co-op](#). But he also admits that this once in a lifetime gig couldn’t have come at a more inopportune time. He writes honestly of the depression, addiction, and trauma stemming from an abusive childhood that made it hard for him to get up everyday. *The Uptown Local* is a touching tribute to an unlikely friend and mentor who changed his life and writing in ways he could have never imagined.

**Buy Now:** *The Uptown Local* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

**What Fire Brings, Rachel Howzell Hall (June 11)**



Best-selling author [Rachel Howzell Hall](#)'s latest thriller, *What Fire Brings*, is a riveting psychological mystery that will keep you guessing until the very end. As the newest writer-in-residence for crime author Jack Beckham, Bailey Meadows must keep the twists coming and the books selling. But what Jack doesn't know is that Bailey took the job to find her friend who went missing in the woods surrounding his home—the same friend who was out in those woods looking for another girl who vanished without a trace. And, as it turns out, neither of those women are the first to mysteriously disappear on his property.

**Buy Now:** *What Fire Brings* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

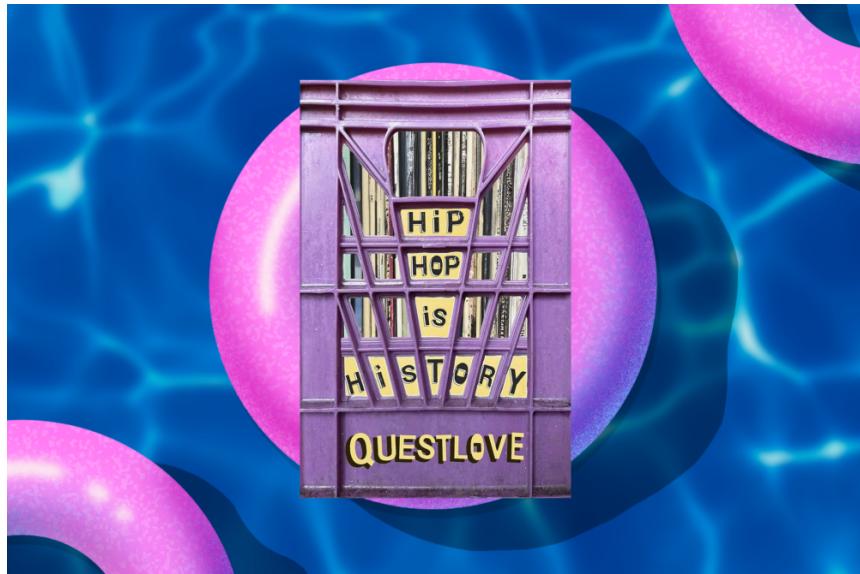
***I'm Mostly Here to Enjoy Myself, Glynnis MacNicol (June 11)***



*I'm Mostly Here to Enjoy Myself* is a provocative travelog that covers one woman's search for radical pleasure. After spending the height of the COVID-19 pandemic alone in her tiny Manhattan apartment, author [Glynnis MacNicol](#) jumped at the opportunity to sublet her friend's Paris home in August 2021. At 46, childless, and unattached, she wanted to prove to herself—and to a world that is not always kind to women of a certain age—that she still had a lot of living to do. Over the course of one Parisian summer, she finds gratification in good food, good wine, and really good sex. (The book's cover is a cheeky nod to just how much time she spends in the nude.) By giving herself over to her indulgences, MacNicol learns to live her best life. With her book, she encourages others to do the same.

**Buy Now:** *I'm Mostly Here to Enjoy Myself* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

**Hip-Hop Is History, Questlove (June 11)**



*Hip-Hop Is History*, Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson’s fifth book, traces the lineage of the titular musical genre alongside his own upbringing in Philadelphia. In the spiritual sequel to his 2021 book, *Music Is History*, the celebrated musician and Oscar-winning director chronicles the first 50 years of hip-hop through insightful and passionate analysis that celebrates the big-named artists who popularized the style, as well as those lesser-known creatives who quietly influenced rap’s rise. Along the way, he offers personal recollections about how the relatively young music style has shaped his identity. A must-read for old school hip-hop heads and burgeoning fans alike.

**Buy Now:** *Hip-Hop Is History* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***One of Our Kind*, Nicola Yoon (June 11)**



From [Nicola Yoon](#), the author of *Everything Everything*, an unsettling social thriller that is *Get Out* meets *Rosemary's Baby*. *One of Our Kind*, Yoon's fourth novel and first for adults, is set in Liberty, Calif., a fictional idyllic all-Black gated community outside of Los Angeles. Jasmyn, a public defender expecting her second child, moves there with her venture capitalist husband and their young son looking for a place where they can feel safe and supported. What she finds isn't the Black utopia she dreamed of, but a town more interested in self-care than social justice issues. When Jasmyn starts digging into the community's history, she uncovers a shocking secret about Liberty's founders that threatens to tear her family apart.

**Buy Now:** *One of Our Kind* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

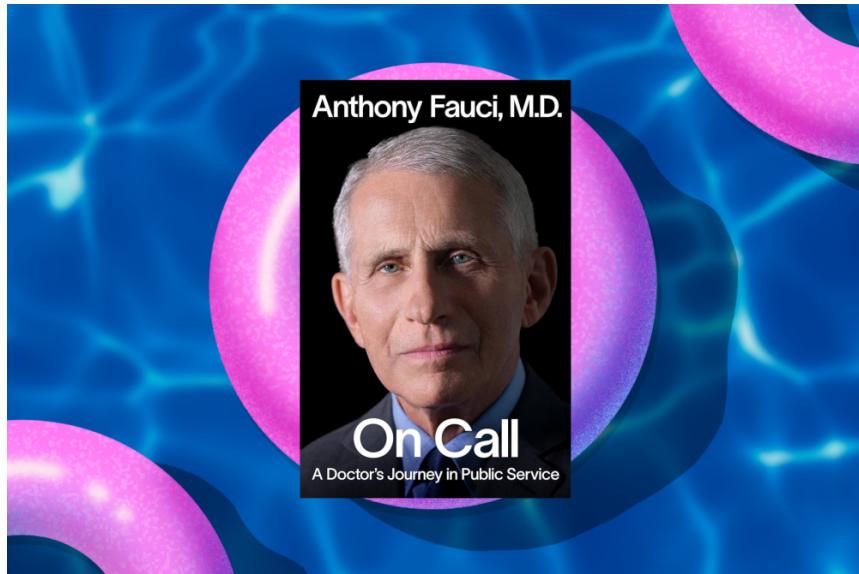
***Parade, Rachel Cusk (June 18)***



Rachel Cusk, the author of *The Outline* trilogy, has never been afraid to get experimental with her writing. In the case of *Parade*, she is once again pushing the boundaries of the literary form. The follow-up to her more conventional 2021 novel, *Second Place*, is a work of abstract fiction that follows G, an artist who takes on nearly a half-dozen different personas. Across four sections, G is a chauvinist painter who creates portraits of his wife upside down, a 19th century female painter who dies in childbirth, a male filmmaker fleeing his repressed parents, a female painter in a dysfunctional marriage, a Black painter excluded by his peers, and a suffering female sculptor. Despite their core differences, each version of G forces readers to ask important philosophical questions regarding art, gender, motherhood, creativity, and objectification.

**Buy Now:** *Parade* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

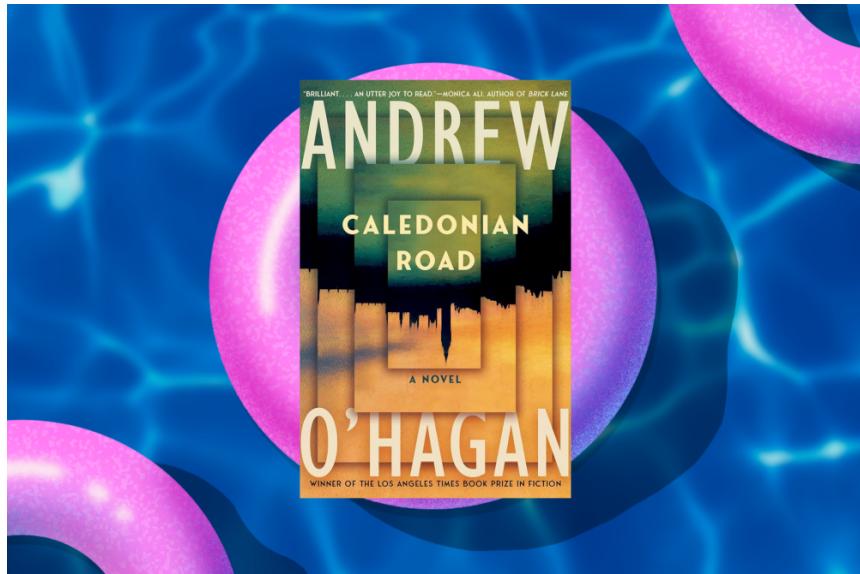
**On Call, Anthony Fauci (June 18)**



The COVID-19 pandemic made Dr. Anthony Fauci a household name, but that was just one chapter in the 83-year-old's long and storied career as an infectious disease expert. In his first memoir, *On Call*, Fauci recounts his time as the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a role he held for nearly 40 years before [stepping down in 2022](#). During his tenure, Fauci worked under seven presidents, starting with Ronald Reagan and ending with current [President Joe Biden](#), and writes about those relationships in the book. In a [statement via his publisher](#), Fauci said that he hopes his book “will serve as a personalized document for the reader to understand better the daunting challenges” that public health officials face.

**Buy Now:** *On Call* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***Caledonian Road, Andrew O'Hagan (June 18)***



For fans of Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*: writer, journalist, and editor-at-large of *London Review of Books* Andrew O'Hagan's sprawling seventh novel, *Caledonian Road*, is a sharp satire aimed at Britain's modern polite society. In the span of one year, art historian, noted professor, and best-selling author Campbell Flynn finds himself entangled with a radical blue collar student, a scandal plagued friend, and an amoral Russian oligarch in hopes of climbing even higher on the social ladder. But it's only a matter of time before Campbell's questionable decisions start to catch up with him in this scathing tragicomedy about greed, corruption, and ambition.

**Buy Now:** *Caledonian Road* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

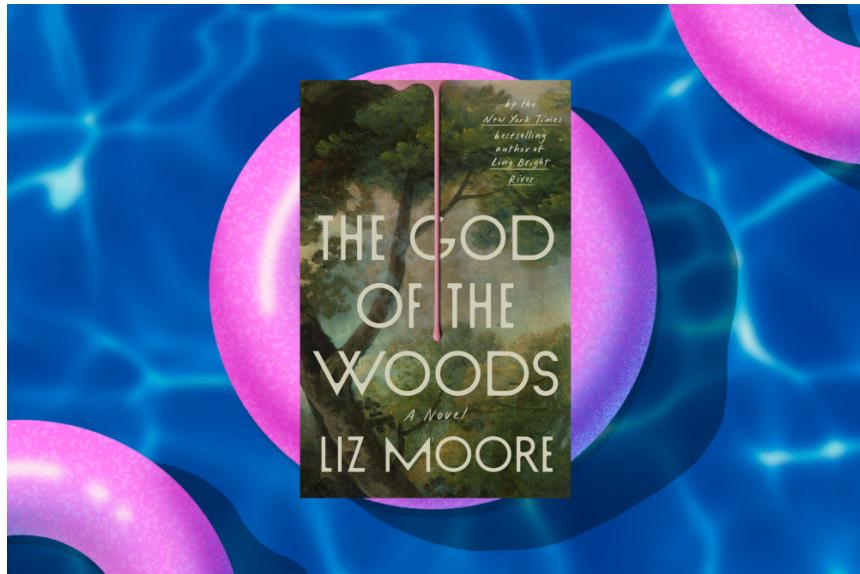
***Devil Is Fine*, John Vercher (June 18)**



In John Vercher's heart-wrenching novel, *Devil Is Fine*, the unnamed protagonist, a biracial writer, finds himself in constant conversation with the teenage son he unexpectedly lost. The boy becomes his dad's quiet companion, helping him get through the days, which are often marred by panic attacks and regrets that he didn't try harder to relate to his late son. Shortly after his teen's death, the narrator learns that he has inherited a plot of land from his estranged white maternal grandfather that was once a slave plantation. He visits the property, planning to sell it, but once there, he begins having visions of those who were brutalized on the grounds. Caught between the natural world and the spirit one, he must come to terms with his family's brutal past and his son's death in order to find salvation.

**Buy Now:** *Devil Is Fine* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***The God of the Woods, Liz Moore (July 2)***



Best-selling author Liz Moore's latest thriller, *The God of the Woods*, begins in 1975 with the disappearance of a 13-year-old girl from an Adirondack summer camp. But Barbara Van Laar is no ordinary camper: she's the troubled teenage daughter of the camp's wealthy owners, whose older child, Bear, also went missing without a trace 14 years earlier. When members of the community—including the camp's director, a head counselor, Barbara's bunkmate, and an inexperienced state police detective—start looking into the young girl's vanishing, they uncover long held family secrets that the Van Laars spent over a decade trying to hide.

**Buy Now:** *The God of the Woods* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

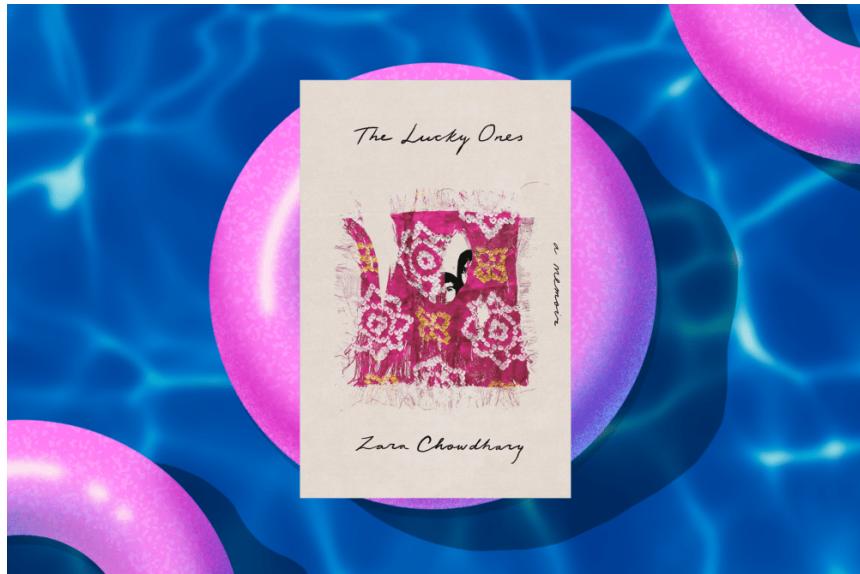
***Long Island Compromise*, Taffy Brodesser-Akner  
(July 9)**



Taffy Brodesser-Akner's follow-up to her best-selling debut, *Fleishman Is In Trouble*, picks up 40 years after mega-rich polystyrene manufacturer Carl Fletcher was kidnapped from his Long Island mansion and returned home less than a week later. The novel looks at how things went back to normal for the Fletchers—or so they wanted to believe. *Long Island Compromise* delves into the lasting impact the event had on Carl, his wife, and their three grown children, weaving in tales of tradition, ambition, and inheritance that span generations of the family's difficult history.

**Buy Now:** *Long Island Compromise* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***The Lucky Ones*, Zara Chowdhary (July 16)**



Zara Chowdhary's timely debut memoir, *The Lucky Ones*, is a moving account of how she and her family survived more than 20 years of [anti-Muslim violence in India](#). The book begins on February 27, 2002, the day of the deadly [Godhra train burning](#), which triggered [India's worst communal riots](#) in over 50 years. Chowdhary, who was a teenager in the early 2000s, recounts in great detail the fear and anxiety her family felt as they watched their Hindu neighbors become their enemies. But she also offers necessary historical and political context for the violence that has transpired between Hindus and Muslims for more than eight decades [and counting](#). *The Lucky Ones* is a harrowing survivor's tale, an important history lesson, and a desperate warning from someone who has seen the tragic effects of ethnic violence.

**Buy Now:** *The Lucky Ones* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

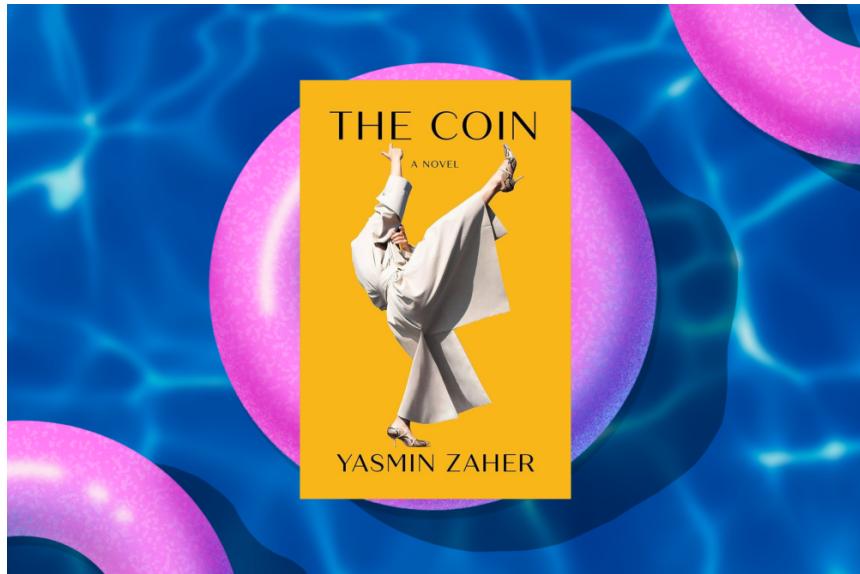
***State of Paradise, Laura van den Berg (July 9)***



In the words of [tortured poet Taylor Swift](#): “Florida is one hell of a drug.” And [Laura van den Berg](#) seems to agree. In her wonderfully weird new novel, *State of Paradise*, a ghostwriter for a famed author escapes to the Sunshine State to be closer to her messed-up family. Amid an unidentified pandemic, her mom becomes the unwitting leader of a cult, her younger sister uses sophisticated virtual reality technology to keep in touch with their dead dad, and their neighbors start going missing at an alarming rate. When her sister suddenly disappears only to return days later, she begins to investigate the origins of the mysterious VR company and excavate her own childhood traumas in hopes of saving those who still remain in her hometown.

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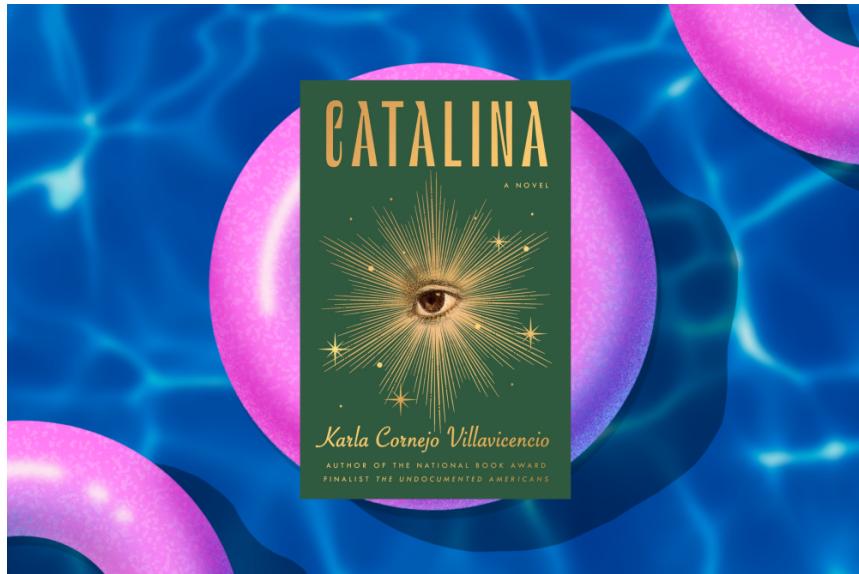
***The Coin, Yasmin Zaher (July 9)***



The protagonist of journalist Yasmin Zaher’s bold debut novel, *The Coin*, is an enigmatic Palestinian woman struggling to find her place in post-2016 New York City. She is “simultaneously rich and poor” due to the fact that she’s unable to access her inheritance while in the U.S., but can’t stop buying designer clothes to keep up a dignified appearance. She teaches at a middle school for underprivileged boys, but sells counterfeit Birkin bags on the side for extra cash. Amid all this dirty business, she becomes obsessed with being clean, rubbing her skin raw in order to take back control of a body and mind that feel caught between two worlds. With *The Coin*, Zaher creates a hypnotic portrait of a woman on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

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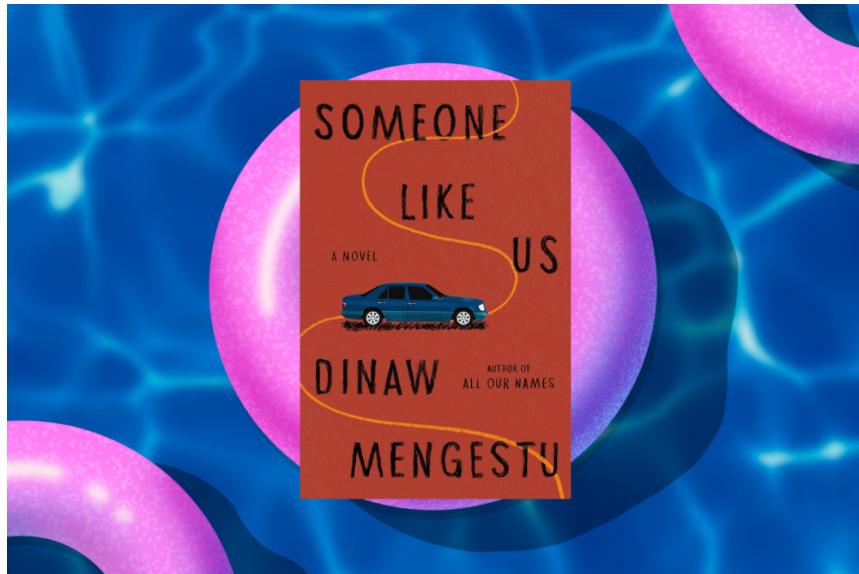
**Catalina, Karla Cornejo Villavicencio (July 23)**



*The Undocumented Americans* author Karla Cornejo Villavicencio's first novel follows the titular character, a charming and cunning undocumented Ivy League student, as she prepares for post-grad life. Due to her immigration status, Catalina Ituralde's future has always been uncertain. To get ahead, she has always had to hustle, and has been rewarded for her drive. But as she gets ready to leave Harvard, she's feeling a bit disenchanted. Unlike her privileged peers, she can't be legally employed, which has left her wondering how she'll pay rent, care for her undocumented grandparents, and finally fall in love. With *Catalina*, Villavicencio draws from her own experience as an undocumented person and Harvard grad to give voice to a fierce, but vulnerable character.

**Buy Now:** *Catalina* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

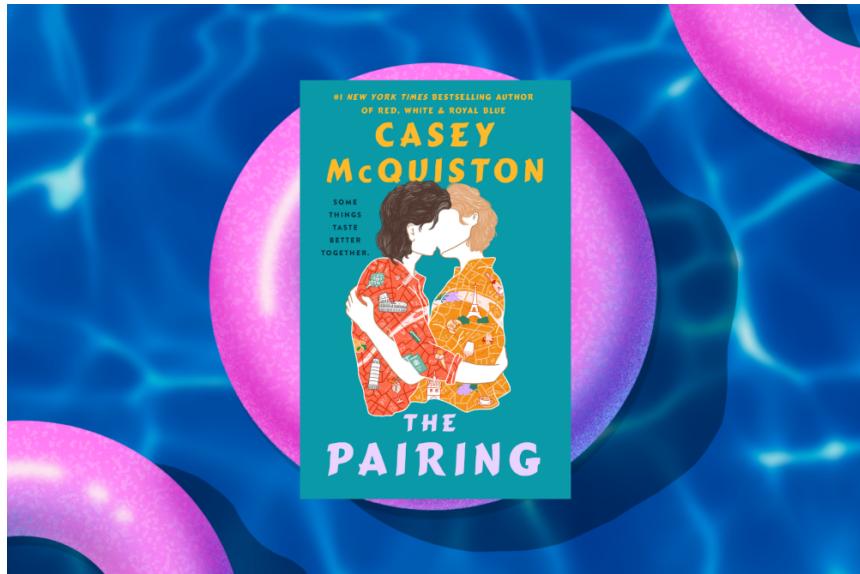
***Someone Like Us*, Dinaw Mengestu (July 30)**



The sudden death of an unconventional father figure leads the protagonist of Dinaw Mengestu's third novel, *Someone Like Us*, on a cross-country journey to untangle the facts and fictions of his life. Amid the breakdown of his marriage, Mamush, a globe-trotting war correspondent, heads back to the [Washington, D.C.](#) suburb where he was raised by his Ethiopian mom. The day he arrives, he learns that Samuel, a charming but troubled family friend, has died. The loss forces Mamush to trace Samuel's immigrant journey, often with the late man's ghost by his side, in this captivating novel about displacement, isolation, and oppression.

**Buy Now:** *Someone Like Us* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

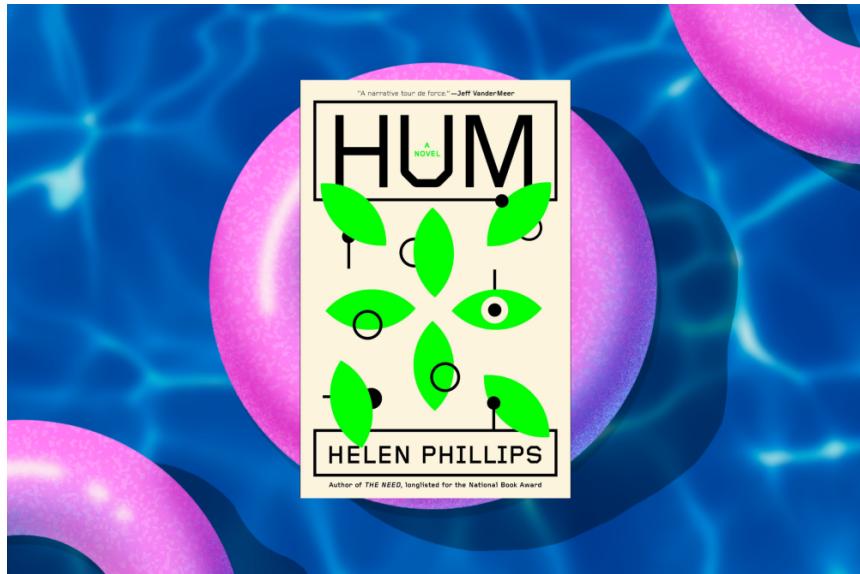
***The Pairing*, Casey McQuiston (Aug. 6)**



[Casey McQuiston](#), the best-selling author of *One Last Stop*, is back with another queer rom-com that is sure to set your heart aflutter. *The Pairing* picks up with sommelier-in-training Theo and pastry chef Kit, childhood best friends-turned-estranged exes, four years after their nasty breakup. The duo have now accidentally found themselves on the same nonrefundable European food tour they were set to embark on together before they called it quits. To prove they're completely over one another, they decide to strike up a friendly bet to see who can hook up with their handsome Italian tour guide first. Horny hijinks definitely ensue in this delicious summer romance.

**Buy Now:** *The Pairing* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

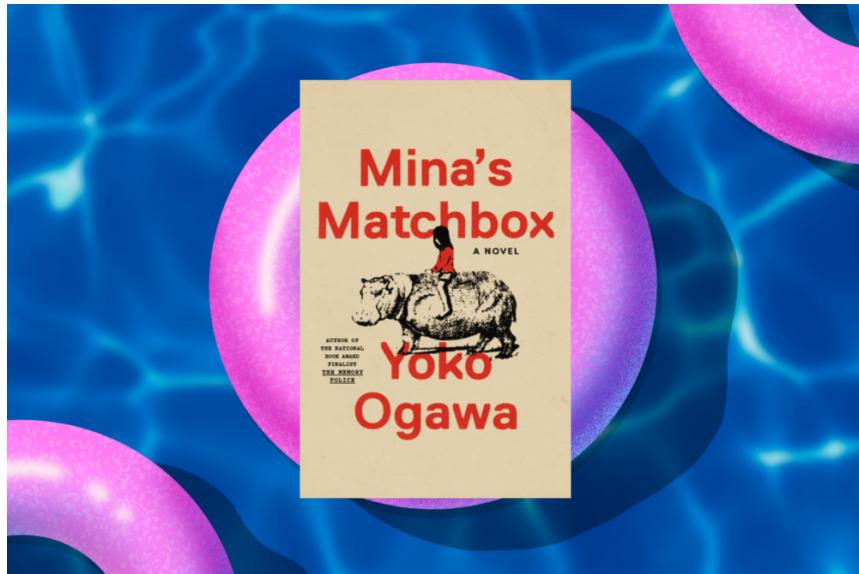
**Hum, Helen Phillips (Aug. 6)**



*Hum*, Helen Phillips' follow-up to her 2019 novel [\*The Need\*](#), is a tense dystopian thriller set in a near-future where sophisticated artificial intelligence threatens human existence as we know it. After losing her job to highly capable robots, known as “hums,” May agrees to take part in an experimental surgery that will make her face unrecognizable to surveillance. The surgery, which brings her closer to becoming more like the AI she was once hired to train, comes with a big payday that helps bankroll a family trip to a nature theme park. When the vacation goes awry, May must do the unthinkable in order to save her husband and kids: seek help from a hum with questionable motives.

**Buy Now:** *Hum* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

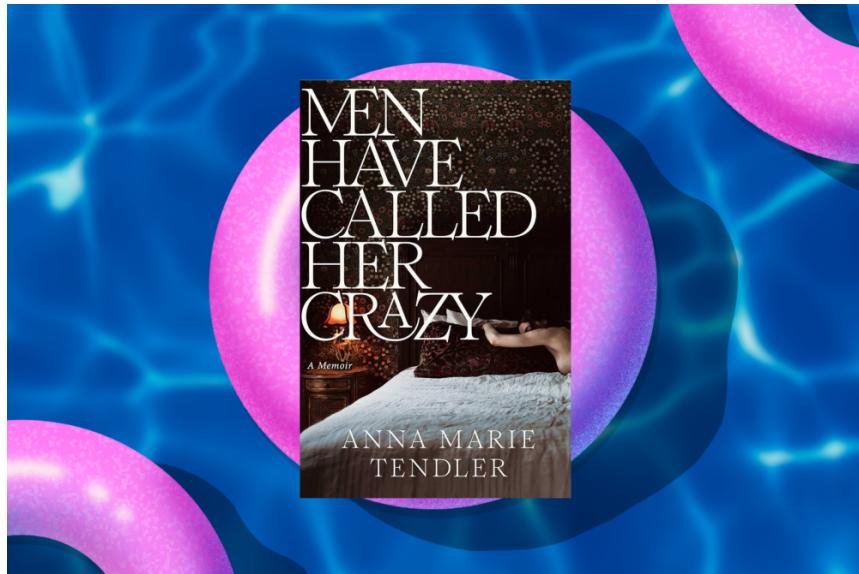
***Mina’s Matchbox*, Yōko Ogawa (Aug. 13)**



*Mina's Matchbox*, celebrated Japanese author Yōko Ogawa's 2006 novel that has been newly translated by Stephen B. Snyder, is a transfixing coming of age tale set in early 1970s Japan. When Tomoko's mom decides to go back to school, the pre-teen is sent to live with her affluent aunt and uncle for a year. When she arrives at their mansion, she discovers eccentric relatives: a German great-aunt still reeling from the events of World War II, a precocious asthmatic cousin who carries matchboxes as her talisman, and a domesticated pygmy hippo, which acts as the family pet. While there she also uncovers a host of secrets that force her to question her family's complicated history.

**Buy Now:** *Mina's Matchbox* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

***Men Have Called Her Crazy*, Anna Marie Tendler (Aug. 13)**



With her debut memoir, *Men Have Called Her Crazy*, artist Anna Marie Tendler steps out of the shadow of her famous ex-husband, comedian [John Mulaney](#). Her new book is not a celebrity tell-all, but a stunning self-portrait of a woman trying to make sense of the misogyny and sexism she has faced throughout her life. With unbridled humor and honesty, she begins the book by recounting her experience checking into a psychiatric hospital in early 2021 for anxiety, depression, and disordered eating. From there, she recalls other pivotal decisions —the first time she self-harmed, lost her virginity, and decided to freeze her eggs—pinpointing the often negative role men have played in her life. With *Men Have Called Her Crazy*, Tendler is finally able to take back the narrative.

**Buy Now:** *Men Have Called Her Crazy* on [Bookshop](#) | [Amazon](#)

*Update: This article previously included Tell Me Everything by Elizabeth Strout. The book is now being published on Sept. 10.*

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## **Bill Ford on Revitalizing Michigan Central Station, the Future of Detroit and EV Politics**

Ayesha Javed is a senior editor at TIME, based in the London bureau. She oversees TIME's business and technology coverage.



Bill Ford, the executive chair of Ford Motor Company, partly credits his experience in Silicon Valley with helping him come up with a plan to restore Detroit's Michigan Central Station. The 111-year-old Beaux-Arts building, designed by the same firm that did New York City's Grand Central Station, had fallen into disuse after closing in the 1980s, becoming a symbol for the city's decline—something Ford had long wanted to change.

Ford, a great-grandson of the automaker's founder, Henry Ford, served on eBay's board in the early 2000s and later went on to found a venture-capital firm to invest in the future of mobility. "I was acutely aware of all the vitality, all the startup energy, and all the funding available for new ideas in the Valley—and I would come back to Michigan and see none of that happening," he says.

“I couldn’t even get anybody in our industry or our company interested in what was going on in Silicon Valley.” While his firm, Fontinalis Partners, found plenty of prospects in the Bay Area, Austin, and even overseas, Ford says they struggled to find Michiganian companies to invest in.

When he spoke about the changes the industry needed to make during a [TED talk](#) in 2011, it wasn’t well-received in the auto industry. “People thought I was crazy,” he says, noting that much of what he’d said the industry needed has since come to pass, such as advances in connected car technology. “It really enforced the fact that we had become an insular company, in an insular industry and an insular town, and that the future was not going to be created here unless there was a concerted effort to do that.”

One part of that effort is now coming to pass: Ford Motor Company bought the abandoned train station in 2018, kicking off a massive preservation project that aims to make the century-old building the centerpiece of a 30-acre technology and cultural hub. On June 6, Michigan Central celebrated its reopening with a concert featuring Motown legend Diana Ross and rock star Jack White, executive produced by rapper Eminem.

Ford spoke with TIME on May 17 about what the project means for Detroit, the auto company’s future, and what he’s learned about leadership.

*This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.*

## **Tell me about the Michigan Central project and why you got involved.**

On a visceral level, the reason I got involved is because I remember the train station as a young boy. And then I remember very vividly, as my life progressed, the train station just being a wreck; it was

often the visual that accompanied a national story about the decay of Detroit. I hated both the fact that the nation was looking at our city the way it was, and also the fact that that was always the visual. And so in the back of my mind, I always was saying to myself, if I'm ever able to think of a reason to take the station over and revitalize it, I would love to. But I could never really come up with a business reason.

One day I was driving by and [it] just clicked in my head and I said, "What if we could reimagine Michigan Central, not as a wonderful trip down memory lane, but also as the place where people come together to make the Motor City the Motor City again, where the future of mobility is worked on." That's why I bought the Book Depository building next door, which is up and running and has 97 startups already in it. Half of those startups are from the Michigan area. The other half are or not, which is great. So we're bringing talent here. [At] Michigan Central, from a work standpoint, we'll have bigger companies like Ford, like Google—these startups will be able to collaborate with them to work on a lot of these interesting things. We can use Michigan Avenue as a really interesting testbed for all kinds of different experiments. The FAA has granted us the airspace, so we can play with [vertical take-off and landing aircraft] solutions and drones and how they connect with vehicles, and how they connect with robots. We have an [inductive charging street now](#), so when you drive your EVs, it'll charge as you drive. We have 20 venture capital companies now in the Book Depository building, so this whole flywheel—[in] which you need all those pieces to have a healthy, innovative ecosystem—is starting to be put together down there.

## **What do you think that this will mean for Detroit?**

For most of my life, Detroit was in decline. I am old enough to remember Detroit before the '67 riots. Prior to that, everything I did was in the city. My pediatrician, my dentist—everything was

there. And then the riots happened and you have many, many years then, of not only white flight, but frankly, white versus Black, suburb versus city. There was no collaboration really in the region. The city was shrinking. This last census, we're growing again, which is awesome. I think there's been so much positive energy in Detroit in the last six or seven years. Our midtown area has been redeveloped. We had the NFL Draft here a couple of weeks ago. There were no incidents and I think the country could see Detroit in a different light. So, in many ways, it will be the exclamation point for the rebirth of our city, because the station itself is going to be a really fun gathering spot. We'll have art, we'll have music, we'll have coffee shops. We were [also] very intentional about connecting it to everything else. Roosevelt Park, which is out in front, has been completely redone and it's very pretty. We have a new Greenway in downtown Detroit. We're building a lot of bike paths and pedestrian areas and [planting] tons and tons of trees. And we're also at the intersection between two iconic neighborhoods that have always been divided—Corktown and Southwest Detroit.

**Ford CEO Jim Farley recently said that, in the wake of the negotiations with the United Auto Workers Union, Ford would be rethinking where it builds some vehicles. What does that mean in terms of Ford's commitment to Detroit?**

Well, our commitment to Detroit has never wavered for 120 years and it won't. Just look at Detroit—you've got things like the Henry Ford Health System, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Ford Field; I redid [the Rouge](#), the Henry Ford Museum. We've been invested as a family in Detroit for many, many, many years and this is kind of doubling down on that and that won't change. We will always support our hometown. I've always believed that a company that isn't making people's lives better shouldn't exist, and part of that is

taking care of the communities in which you operate. So that won't change at all. And we are the most American company—we make the [most vehicles here, we employ the most Americans](#) [of any automaker], and I'm very proud of that. And I've also never thought of our employees as, "UAW or white collar." To me, we're all just Ford employees, and I've got a tremendous relationship with our union employees. I really cherish those relationships. But the business realities, which both the UAW leadership and ourselves have to deal with, sometimes lead us to [make] decisions that short-term may not look like the most wonderful, but long-term, they always work out. Look, 120 years later, we're still here, we're growing, and we've been adding jobs in the last six, seven years.

**You were on the board of eBay and co-founded a VC firm, Fontinalis Partners. What lessons did you learn from Silicon Valley?**

I think, interestingly, in some ways Silicon Valley is as insular, in its own way, as our industry was—but on the very positive side, there was a belief that anything was possible, that smart people could imagine the future and that they could find people to back them on that journey. I found that really compelling, very exciting, and in many ways, it was like the days when my great-grandfather founded Ford. But we had lost that here in Michigan and in our industry, and in our company. I was determined to get that back. Because, if we didn't, the future would not be created here.

**You come from a long line of executives. What lessons have you learned from them about leadership?**

You only need a couple things to be a really good leader, I think you need to have a very strong set of values and live those values. And you have to be authentic, and you can't try and be anybody else, because I think most people have a great BS detector. [Often] somebody gets put into a higher position and they believe they have to change. Well, everybody who knows that person sees that immediately and they lose all credibility. I've seen leaders who are introverts, I've seen leaders who are extroverts. I've seen leaders who are kind of egocentric. I've seen leaders who are very selfless. But the one thing they all have in common is they're genuine.

And admit your mistakes and learn from them. I still see a lot of people in important positions who portray themselves as infallible. Well, that's not possible and I think that really stops you from learning.

## **You consider yourself an environmentalist and you've been championing the EV side of the business. Where do you see Ford's future and how are you thinking about the competitive landscape?**

It's ever-changing. Several years ago, we divided our businesses into: Ford Blue, the combustion engine business; Ford Model e, which is our electric vehicle business; and Ford Pro, which is our commercial-facing business. And that really shines a spotlight, like on Ford Model e, you can actually see exactly where the gaps are. A lot of companies will hide that. But for us, there's tremendous clarity. Now there's a bit of pain in that because everyone can say, "Oh, wow, you guys are losing X per vehicle." Yes, we are, and we can't go on like that.

We made a decision a few years ago in our internal combustion engine [ICE] business, to focus on our really highly emotional products—Bronco, Raptor, Mustang, Ranger. They're selling out

and people love them. Then we also made the decision to invest a lot in hybrids.

The one thing I've learned in my career is, we can know directionally where things are going, but we can never know timelines. Our research shows the people who have bought EVs, they're heavily intentional to buy another EV for their next vehicle. The charging infrastructure certainly has to get better and that's a pain point for a lot of EV customers. And then the price to the customer has to come down dramatically. But I think both of those things will happen.

We've just got [a] choice for everybody, so we're not shoving anything down anybody's throat. If you want an EV, great. We're the number two seller in the U.S. of EVs. If you want hybrids, that may be a wonderful transitional technology to get you ultimately to full EV and if you want an ICE vehicle, we've got those too, so I feel like our strategy is the right one. The timeframe is unknown. Because we never could have in our wildest dreams imagined our vehicles, i.e. EVs, becoming political hot potatoes, like they are today.

## **How have you handled political discussions around EVs?**

There's no question in Washington you tend to have different conversations depending on who you're talking to. Some people say "why can't you make more of them" and others say "why are you making them, because we just got energy-independent as a country?" But the reality is, the fact that we have something for everybody allows the temperature to come down in those conversations and then allows a more thoughtful discussion about, where should we go as an industry, what does it take to get there? What kind of technology is needed? Do we have the right American supply base to deliver that technology? My experience

has been that the path that we've chosen—which is basically we're not forcing anything on anybody and the customer will decide—tends to almost take all the emotion out of the discussion, and then you can get into the mechanics.

## **You have a great view into consumers' priorities. It's an election year. What is the outlook for the U.S. economy in your opinion?**

I think everybody's crystal balls are necessarily cloudy. You have some people saying we're heading for a soft landing. Other prominent leaders, like Jamie Dimon, say maybe not. Our demand is still pretty strong right now but we're aware that credit card delinquencies are rising and there's some things we're looking very closely at. We're in an election year. The one thing that hurts us as a company and our industry is when things go from pillar to post from a policy standpoint. Our lead times are long. We have to build prototypes, we have to make sure they're safe, we have to make sure the supply chain at every step is ready to go. So what helps us is clarity in terms of where we're headed from a policy standpoint. I hope we can have that as we go forward, because we can live, in time, with lots of different policies—but what we cannot do is react in a very short-term way.

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