JULY 7, 2025

TIME 100 COMPANIES

HOW WAYMO IS TAKING THE DRIVER'S SEAT

+

MAXIMUM EFFORT
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...and 91 more of
THE WORLD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL BUSINESSES

Waymo co-CEOs Dmitri Dolgov and Tekedra Mawakana

TIME Magazine

[Jul 7, 2025]

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How We Chose the TIME100 Companies of 2025

Rumbles have been heard for years of artificial intelligence entering the physical world, but no example is more tangible than the autonomous taxi company Waymo. While AI-driven taxis seem futuristic or scary to many, Waymos have already become a seamless way of life in a handful of major metropolises, where they've completed over 10 million rides. This spring, in hopes of seeing into our AI present and future, TIME correspondent Andrew R. Chow rode them around Austin and spoke with Waymo co-CEOs Dmitri Dolgov and Tekedra Mawakana about how the company has quietly taken over the roads—and where they're headed next.

See the list here

His reporting is the basis for the cover story of our fifth annual TIME100 Most Influential Companies issue, out this week. Waymo sets one example for responsible tech development: with a powerful cause (to cut traffic deaths), they've developed their technology carefully and rolled it out slowly (glacially, by Silicon Valley standards), with the knowledge that a single fatal accident

could mean the end of not just their company, but their industry as a whole. “Trust is hard to build and easy to lose,” Mawakana tells TIME. We’ve learned the amount of humility needed: Ultimately, it’s the riders who are going to decide.”

On the issue’s second cover, Ryan Reynolds also centered his company on building public trust, but at breakneck speed. The marketing and production firm Maximum Effort coined the term “fastvertising” for pouncing on a cultural moment to produce a relevant ad in just a few days, and it’s Reynolds’s honest, accessible style that gains consumer trust. It’s working: The companies Reynolds co-owns or has sold are valued at over $14 billion; his latest *Deadpool* movie became the highest-grossing R-rated movie ever last year with more than $1.3 billion at the box office; and his soccer team, Wrexham AFC, became the first ever to win three consecutive promotions up the British football ranks.

To select the list of the TIME100 Most Influential Companies**,** our editors, led by Emma Barker Bonomo, requested suggestions and applications from across sectors, surveyed our contributors and correspondents around the world, and sought advice from outside experts. No single data point or financial metric makes a TIME100 Company. Instead, we looked at a mosaic of qualities, studying impact, innovation, ambition, and success, each in the forms that take shape today. And as we say for all TIME100 projects: influence comes in many forms, for better and for worse.

In addition to the 100 companies featured on the list, this year we are introducing the TIME100 Companies Impact Awards—recognizing five additional standout companies making meaningful contributions in the fields of AI, Health, Sustainability, Equality, and Culture. The firms were selected from applicants that stood out for their bold vision and tangible results. The inaugural recipients are: Google DeepMind for Impact in AI, Vertex Pharmaceuticals for Impact in Health, Schneider Electric for Impact in

Sustainability, Janngo Capital for Impact in Equality, and The Lego Group for Impact in Culture.

Read about all of the TIME100 Most Influential Companies of 2025 here.

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https://time.com/7297167

A New Middle East Is Unfolding Before Our Eyes

Vick is an editor at large at TIME. He has also served as TIME's Jerusalem bureau chief. He has reported from 60 countries and in 2001 was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for coverage of the spread of AIDS in Africa.

It might be difficult to discern through the black clouds billowing from bomb craters in Tehran, but Iran has spent most of the 21st century as the region's rising power.

Until recently, things had really been going its way. In Iraq, the U.S. toppled Saddam Hussein, then departed, having turned Iran's largest and most dangerous neighbor from an enemy to a vassal even before Tehran's militias rescued Baghdad from ISIS, and then stayed. The forces Iran sent to Syria did double duty, rescuing the Assad regime while opening an arms pipeline to Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia fighting beside them. Based in Lebanon, Hezbollah was the crown jewel of the "Axis of Resistance" that Iran had arrayed against Israel.

And for more than 80 years, opposition to Israel had defined the Middle East.

For the Islamic Republic of Iran, it still does. Removal of the Jewish state from “Islamic lands” is core to the ideology of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which cast Iran in the unlikely role of leader of the Muslim world. America was the Great Satan, but for Iran’s proxies in Baghdad, Lebanon, and Yemen, Israel was the nearer target. So on the eve of Oct. 7, 2023, the leaders of Hamas, the only prominent Palestinian node in the axis, had reason to assume that after breaching Israeli defenses on the Gaza Strip and pouring into Israel by the thousands, they would not be fighting alone for long.

But the axis of resistance barely resisted at all. Hezbollah launched a few missiles a day toward Israel when the “Zionist entity” was most vulnerable. Iran’s leaders had scanned the battlefield and, seeing an opponent backed not only by U.S. arms and intelligence, but also a nuclear arsenal, remembered why they were investing in one of their own: survival. In the words of Ayatollah Ruhollah - Khomeini, creator of the theocratic system that governs Iran, “The preservation of the system is the highest priority.” Solidarity with the Palestinians was laudable, but there’s also such a thing as self-interest.

The problem, for both Iran and the Palestinian cause, is that the rest of the Middle East had already come to the same conclusion. During the two decades Iran was extending its military reach in the name of the Palestinians, the wealthy kingdoms of the Persian Gulf had been making common cause with the Jewish state.

The fact is, most of the Arab world had made some accommodation or other with Israel. Egypt and Jordan, which share borders with Israel, signed peace treaties with it after suffering repeated military defeats at its hands. The Gulf states aligned with Israel in large part out of a shared enmity for Iran. As home to Islam's dominant Sunni branch, the kingdoms know Iran not only as radical, but also as the nominal leaders of the minority Shi'ite branch, and thus a rival.

Saudi Arabia, custodian of Islam's holy sites, has its own claim to leadership of the world's Muslims.

As autocratic states, the Gulf kingdoms were also eager clients for an Israeli tech sector that had grown out of its military. Surveillance, not least of millions of Palestinians under occupation (and obliged to use Israeli phone systems), generated startups like the spyware firm NSO Group, which soon found clients in the Arab regimes. One, the United Arab Emirates, was the first nation to cement diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords, the signal diplomatic achievement of the first Trump Administration. Three other Arab states followed, and the Saudis keep signaling their intention to do the same once the situation in Gaza permits.

But Gaza churns on, a war Israel had not expected and has no plan to win, because at bottom it's not a military affair. The Palestinian question—What to do about the people who claim the same land Jewish Israelis do?—will still be waiting when the shooting stops. The war on Iran, by contrast, is one Israel spent years planning for, and opened with the playbook of deception, decapitation, and precision strikes on missile sites that decimated Hezbollah in the space of a month last September, freeing Israelis from the dread of the militia's 100,000 missiles, and exposing Iran to the Israeli offensive that began June 13.

Read more: *How Netanyahu Pushed Trump Toward War*

That day, a shepherd posted cell-phone footage of an Israeli C-130 low in the sky over Syria, sheep bells clanking over the roar of the engines. The Assad family had fled the country months earlier, helpless to keep rebels out of Damascus without Hezbollah. Iran sent a plane to evacuate its generals to Tehran. There, the question is how Israel will choose to define victory. Regime change did not go so well in Iraq. And the stated goal of demolishing Iran's nuclear facilities appeared impossible without U.S. airstrikes.

That decision rested with Donald Trump. His choice may alter the region in unforeseen ways. But by reaching past the Palestinians to embrace Israel, as well as the sheiks of the Gulf, the U.S. President already has described the contours of its new, more transactional reality. In 1945, the mere prospect of an Israeli state inspired a boycott by every Arab one, in the name of the Palestinians. Eighty years later, an Arab nation can declare outrage that 55,000 have been killed in Gaza, then dispatch jets to intercept Iranian missiles aimed at Tel Aviv, joining Israeli warplanes in the skies over a new Middle East.

Update, June 22, 2025:

This story was updated to reflect breaking news.

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https://time.com/7295798

What’s At Stake This Summer As Trump Targets Heat and Climate Experts

Shah is a reporter at TIME.

Experts predict this summer might be hotter than average—and the U.S. is not prepared to meet the challenge. Much of the Midwest and Northeast are forecasted to see temperatures “persistently above average” according to a Weather Channel prediction, while the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center estimates that the entire country will see above normal temperatures—with the only difference being in severity.

This comes as the Trump Administration has conducted layoffs on climate and heat related initiatives and cut funding for research grants on extreme heat. Experts warn that this will risk the country’s ability to protect communities from extreme heat.

Heat experts at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the National Integrated Heat Health

Information System (NIHHIS) were told in early April that their positions would be eliminated as part of the cuts made by the Trump Administration's Department of Governmental Efficiency. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) entire environmental health unit was cut, though some jobs were restored last week.

"What was lost there is just a giant value to communities," says V. Kelly Turner, associate professor of urban planning at University of California, Los Angeles.

Extreme heat is not recognized as a disaster in the U.S.—despite being the largest weather-related killer in the country. Heat deaths have doubled in the past 24 years, and the number has been steadily rising since 2016, according to a study published in JAMA, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, last August.

Despite this, the issue has long lacked the same federal resources given to other natural disasters. "Heat actually doesn't have a home in the federal government," says Turner. "Other disasters, like fires or hurricanes have programs and institutions and policies and funding streams associated with them—heat didn't have any of that."

Read more: *How to Know When High Temperatures Are Getting Dangerous*

Previous administrations were only beginning to address the issue. The Obama Administration founded NIHHIS, an interagency network aimed at providing actionable solutions to protect people from extreme heat, which remained operational throughout the first Trump Administration. Last July, a working group convened by the Biden Administration published the first ever "National Heat Strategy"—which has now been removed from government websites by the current Trump Administration. The bipartisan Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) dedicated funds towards climate

resilience projects—many of which addressed extreme heat on a community level—but the future of the law's many provisions remains unclear.

"The government was catching up," says Turner. "We only kind of got halfway up the hill, and now we're rolling the ball back down."

Communities in the U.S. are already woefully underprepared to address extreme heat management—and experts say cuts will only worsen our response.

"We're not prepared for the heat we're experiencing today, let alone the heat we will experience due to climate change. We are a nation unprepared for extreme temperatures," says Ladd Keith, director of the Heat Resilience Initiative. "Really we need a whole government approach to address extreme heat, and it needs to be especially [aimed at] supporting small local communities that don't have the resources to address it on their own."

Read more: *Extreme Heat Is Endangering America's Workers—and Its Economy*

Today, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) began a public hearing on the creation of a first-of-its-kind proposal for federal heat health standards for workers. But experts say it could be on the chopping block after the Trump Administration fired federal heat experts from NIOSH in the spring.

"The general consensus is, among labor advocates and those who've been working on the OSHA rule, that it will probably not survive the rulemaking process," says Keith.

Both Keith and Turner were working on the Center for Heat Resilient Communities, an IRA funded program that aimed at helping local communities come up with their own heat action

plans. The day before they were expected to announce the first cohort of cities taking part, their funding was cut by the Administration.

The funding cut, Turner says, highlights a dichotomy between the Trump Administration's aim to leave disaster response to communities—without providing them with the tools to respond.

"There's a general trend right now of saying the federal government shouldn't have a hand in addressing disasters at all and that that should be a state by state issue, or even a community by community issue," she says. "The problem is that would be an unfunded mandate, and I don't know that there is the knowledge store, and there definitely is not the financial wherewithal, to actually address heat in that way."

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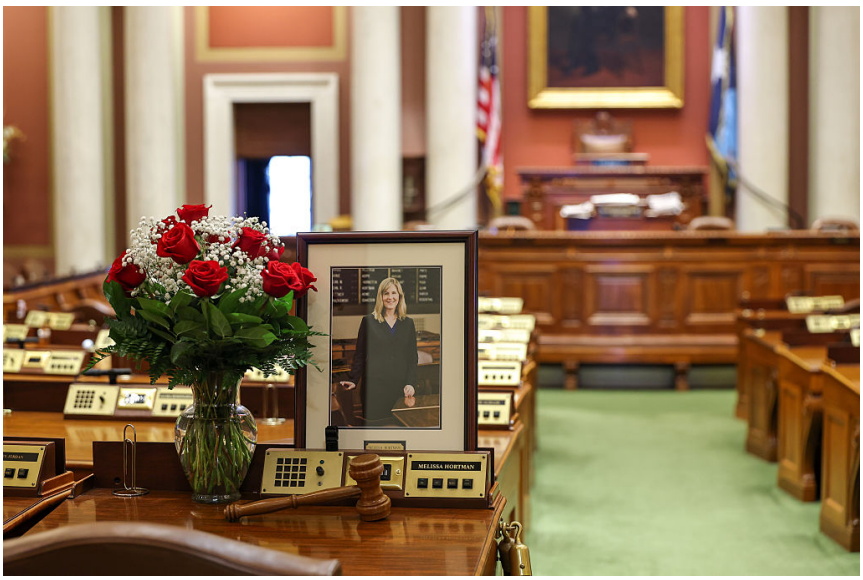
https://time.com/7294598

The Rise of Political Violence and Targeting of Lawmakers in the U.S.

Lee is a reporter at TIME. She covers U.S. news with a focus on health and reproductive rights.



The Brief June 17, 2025

Updates on the rise of political violence in the U.S., Israel and Iran, and more

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The shootings of two Minnesota lawmakers and their spouses this past weekend are the latest instances of political violence that has risen across the U.S. in recent years.

Democratic state Rep. Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, were shot and killed on Saturday by a man who authorities say was impersonating a police officer. The same shooter attacked Democratic state Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, who have been hospitalized with multiple gunshot wounds. Authorities apprehended and are charging Vance Boelter, 57, in connection with both shootings. Boelter is facing federal murder charges that carry the possibility of the death penalty, in addition to state charges.

The attacks come as U.S. lawmakers face a rising threat of political violence. Members of Congress and state and local officials have been targeted in multiple high-profile violent incidents in recent years, including the 2011 shooting of then-Rep. Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona, the 2017 shooting at a Congressional baseball practice that left Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana and several other people injured, and the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Though no lawmakers were wounded in that instance, more than 100 people were injured amid the storming of the building and at least seven deaths were tied to the attack, according to a bipartisan Senate report.

The number of concerning statements and direct threats against members of Congress—including their families and staff—investigated by the U.S. Capitol Police has increased markedly within the past seven years, jumping from 3,939 in 2017 to 9,625 in 2021, according to the agency.

And the past year has seen another spike. The Capitol Police investigated 9,474 direct threats and concerning statements in 2024, up from 8,008 the previous year. Reuters identified at least 51 incidents of political violence from January to October last year in the lead-up to the 2024 election, among 300 it had recorded since the Jan. 6 attack up to that point. The news outlet reported "the cases are part of the biggest and most sustained increase in U.S. political violence since the 1970s."

Read More: *A Stark Look at the Recent History of Political Violence in America*

Here are some of the attacks that have been carried out against U.S. lawmakers in a violent year for the country's politics.

The assassination attempts against Trump

On July 13, 2024, a gunman fired multiple shots toward the stage where Donald Trump was speaking at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. One bullet struck Trump in his right ear,, while one bystander was killed and two others were wounded.

The shooter was later identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks, 20. He was killed by a Secret Service sniper at the scene.

Just two months later, authorities foiled another apparent attempt on Trump's life at Trump International Golf Club in West Palm Beach, Florida, in September 2024. While Trump was golfing, a Secret Service agent who was posted ahead of Trump noticed a man holding a rifle, about 400 yards away, poking out of a tree line nearby. The suspect didn't fire any rounds and didn't have a line of sight to Trump, authorities said. Secret Service personnel fired shots at the suspect, who dropped his weapon, along with other items, and fled the scene in a vehicle.

Trump was unharmed in the second attack. Authorities later apprehended and identified the suspect as Ryan Wesley Routh, a one-time Trump supporter who was passionate about defending Ukraine in the war with Russia.

The arson attack on Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's home

In April, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro and his family were in their home when they were awakened by a state trooper banging on

the door after an arsonist set the home on fire. They were safely evacuated, and firefighters tackled the blaze. Video surveillance of the incident showed a suspect climbing over a fence, breaking into Shapiro's home through a window, and throwing in an incendiary device, according to the affidavit. Another device was thrown into the home as well.

The suspect was later apprehended and identified by authorities as Cody A. Balmer. Authorities said Balmer admitted to setting Shapiro's home on fire, and said that he would have "beaten him with a hammer" if the governor had found him.

The shootings of two Minnesota lawmakers and their spouses

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz called Saturday's shootings acts of "targeted political violence."

"Peaceful discourse is the foundation of our democracy. We don't settle our differences with violence or at gunpoint," Walz said. "This tragic act here in Minnesota should serve as a reminder to all of us that democracy and the debates in the halls of Congress, in state houses, in school boards, is a way to settle our differences peacefully and move society to a better place."

Read more: *Suspected Shooter of Minnesota Lawmakers Potentially Facing Federal Death Penalty: What We Know About Vance L. Boelter*

Boelter is facing federal charges related to the stalking of both lawmakers, the murder of Hortman and her husband, and the shooting of Hoffman and his wife. He is also being charged on the state level in connection with the murder of Hortman and her husband, as well as the shooting of Hoffman and his wife.

Authorities said Monday that Boelter went to the homes of two other Minnesota elected officials in between the shootings as well. Law enforcement officials recovered a “manifesto” from the vehicle believed to be used by the suspect that they said listed Hortman’s and Hoffman’s names, among a number of local lawmakers and organizations. Democratic Minnesota Sen. Tina Smith was among the names on Boelter’s list, she told NPR.

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https://time.com/7294891

What the Trump-Musk Feud Means for SpaceX and NASA

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.

What happens in Washington decidedly does not stay in Washington, with practically every action taken by the richest and most powerful country in the world having a near-immediate global reaction—on tariffs, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, global health, and more. Sometimes those reactions aren’t even confined to the planet—as the recent social-media smackdown between President Donald Trump and former adviser Elon Musk illustrated.

On June 5, as the feud between the two erstwhile besties escalated, Trump posted on his Truth Social Platform, “The easiest way to save money in our Budget, Billions and Billions of Dollars, is to terminate Elon’s Governmental Subsidies and Contracts. I was always surprised that Biden didn’t do it!”

Just over 90 minutes later, in a post on X, Musk clapped back: “In light of the President’s statement about cancellation of my government contracts, @SpaceX will begin decommissioning its Dragon spacecraft immediately.”

Not long after that post went wide, Musk quietly deleted it. Later that evening, an X user posted to Trump and Musk, “This is a shame this back and forth. You are both better than this. Cool off and take a step back for a couple days.” Minutes later, Musk responded, “Good advice. OK, we won’t decommission Dragon.”

Read more: *The Musk-Trump Implosion Can Be Seen From Space*

That defused the immediate emergency, but the threat and counterthreat raised questions about just how dependent America’s space efforts are on the whims of two sometimes mercurial billionaires. Could a mere word from Musk ground the nation? Could a stroke of a Trump Sharpie similarly hobble SpaceX? The short answer in both cases is maybe, but not likely.

There’s no overstating just how central SpaceX has become in the space sector in the 23 years since it was founded as the Space Exploration Technologies Corporation. Since the inaugural flight of the company’s Falcon 9 in 2010, the rocket has become the world’s workhorse vehicle for rides to orbit, with 485 completed missions, including 440 acrobatic landings of its reusable first stage. The rocket and its Dragon spacecraft provide regular service to the International Space Station (ISS), carrying crews up and down, and ferrying cargo and supplies aboard uncrewed Dragons. In 2024, the company’s larger Falcon Heavy launched NASA’s Europa Clipper spacecraft to Jupiter’s moon Europa. It is set to launch the ambitious Nancy Grace Roman Telescope in May 2027.

The working relationship between SpaceX and the government is by no means limited to NASA. In April, as *Ars Technica* reports, the U.S. Space Force awarded the company a $5.9 billion contract,

making SpaceX the leading provider of launch services for Pentagon satellites. The military is also a major customer of SpaceX's Starlink satellite constellation, with 50 military commands now using the orbiting Internet service, according to *Defense News*.

"We have $22 billion in government contracts," said Gwynne Shotwell, SpaceX's president and COO, in a live streamed public panel last year. "We earned that. We bid it, we were the lowest price, best bidder, we won and we execute."

If anything, the company is going to have the opportunity to execute still more, reinforcing the ties between SpaceX and the government. In 2021, NASA selected SpaceX's still-in-development Starship rocket to serve as the lander that is planned to carry American astronauts down from lunar orbit to the surface of the moon sometime before the end of the decade. In 2024, the space agency tapped SpaceX to build the vehicle that will nudge the ISS out of orbit when the program ends in 2030. And in May, Trump's so-called skinny budget called for NASA to cancel its over-budget and behind-schedule Space Launch System, the 21st century answer to the 1960s' Saturn V moon rocket, leaving Starship as the likeliest successor.

Meantime, while Boeing's Starliner spacecraft was supposed to be joining Dragon in providing rides to the ISS—taking a share of the launch business revenue from SpaceX—Starliner famously failed in its inaugural flight last year. This left astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams stranded aboard the station for 8 months, on a mission that was supposed to last merely eight days. Similarly, Blue Origin, the rocket company founded by Musk's fellow mega-billionaire Jeff Bezos, was expected to provide some launch-service competition for SpaceX, but the company has managed just one, only partially successful orbital launch of its New Glenn rocket, in January 2025, and has limited most of its activity to flying popgun suborbital missions for wealthy space tourists.

“It’s not a planned monopoly,” said Shotwell in the live stream. “If our competitors could get it together…”

All of this leaves SpaceX and the government mutually interdependent, with Washington counting on the company to provide services no one else currently can, and the company happy for the paying work. That’s not to say neither one could foul the joint nest. Trump’s nomination of private astronaut and Musk friend Jared Isaacman as NASA administrator was widely seen as a sign of Musk’s influence on the president—and Trump’s decision on May 31 to pull the nomination was similarly seen as the first sign of the rift between Musk and Trump. But the president has made no other moves against Musk-world, and Musk’s decision to delete his provocative post on X may have cooled tempers on both sides. SpaceX investors and other customers may serve as a brake on Musk’s worst tendencies, and lawmakers from space-heavy states including California, Texas, and Florida may similarly restrain Trump.

None of this says that neither man is beyond acting against his own—and his government’s or his company’s—best interests. The scorpion in the venerable fable famously stung the frog that was its only ride across the river—explaining before they both sank and drowned that “it’s in my nature.” Trump’s and Musk’s natures have always been impulsive. The space and defense sectors can only hope the two men show some restraint now.

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https://time.com/7292326

Judge Declares Mistrial on Final Charge in Harvey Weinstein's Retrial: What to Know

Lee is a reporter at TIME. She covers U.S. news with a focus on health and reproductive rights.

The judge in Harvey Weinstein's sex crimes retrial declared a mistrial on the final charge the disgraced movie mogul faced, a day after the jury delivered a split verdict on two other charges.

The mistrial declaration on Thursday came after the jury foreperson, who alleged he had been threatened by another juror, refused to return to deliberate. On Wednesday, the jury convicted Weinstein of one charge, acquitted him of another, and failed to reach a consensus on the third.

Weinstein has been accused by numerous women of sexual harassment, assault, and misconduct over the span of about three decades.

The accusations levied against him sparked the landmark #MeToo movement, and his convictions in New York on rape and sexual

assault charges in 2020 and on sexual offenses in Los Angeles in 2022 were seen as victories for the movement.

Read more: *Harvey Weinstein and Hollywood's Ugly Casting Couch History*

But last year, the case against him in New York was thrown into limbo when the state's top court overturned his conviction and sent the case back to the Manhattan courthouse.

Here's what to know about the case, the jury's verdict, and why the judge declared a mistrial.

Why was Weinstein being retried?

Weinstein was initially convicted in 2020 of sexual assault and rape in the third degree, and acquitted of predatory sexual assault and of first-degree rape.

Read more: *Harvey Weinstein's Mixed Verdict Shows the Challenge of Prosecuting Sexual Assault*

But in 2024, the New York Court of Appeals overturned his conviction, saying that the appointed judge had prejudiced Weinstein's case by permitting prosecutors to bring women who were not directly tied to the charges to the stand.

Three women—Lauren Young, Dawn Dunning, and Tarale Wulff—testified in 2020 about their interactions with Weinstein. The testimony was permitted under a New York state law that allows testimony on "prior bad acts" to show behavioral trends.

But New York's top court said that the three women's testimonies "served no material non-propensity purpose."

With Weinstein's conviction overturned, the case went to a retrial.

What did the jury decide?

Jurors on Wednesday convicted the former movie mogul of forcibly subjecting a person to a criminal sex act, related to an incident in 2006. But they acquitted him of another criminal sex act charge stemming from a 2006 incident.

They were unable to reach a verdict on a charge that Weinstein raped a woman in 2013.

Weinstein, who has repeatedly denied sexually assaulting or raping anyone, had pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Why did the judge declare a mistrial?

The judge declared a mistrial on Thursday on the final charge of third-degree rape.

The jury foreperson said that day that he was unwilling to return to deliberations after telling the judge before the jury delivered its partial verdict on Wednesday that another juror told him “You know me; you going to see me outside,” according to NBC News.

The foreperson told the judge he felt “afraid inside there” and could not return, the outlet reported, citing a transcript from the state court.

The judge said jury deliberations “sometimes become heated” and that he understood “this particular deliberation was more heated than some others,” according to the New York *Times*, though he noted other jurors had not described “anything that rose to the level of threats.”

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https://time.com/7293311

Sly Stone Knew Why America Rioted Better Than Anyone

Chow is a technology correspondent at TIME. He covers crypto, AI, tech regulation, and culture.

Fifty-five summers ago, a riot broke out in Chicago's Grant Park, where Sly and the Family Stone was booked to play a concert. Sly was on en route, but the crowd, fearing that the erratic rock star wouldn't appear, started throwing bottles and rocks onstage. This, in turn, provoked police to wade into the crowd, beating people with nightsticks. As the incensed crowd spilled out across the park, windows were smashed, and cars were overturned. Three people were shot, although it wasn't clear by whom, and 160 more were injured.

The dystopian scene was a far cry from a Sly concert the year before: Woodstock in '69, where the band, operating at the peak of its powers, had implored its 400,000 rapt attendees to take it higher into the wee hours of the morning. But the Summer of Love and the ensuing years had given way to disillusionment and rage, and Sly felt this shift acutely. "I had sensed a shadow was falling over

America," he wrote in his 2023 memoir, *Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)*. "The possibility of possibility was leaking out and leaving the country drained."

Sly, who died on June 9 at the age of 82, wrung greatness out of this abyss. He channeled the Grant Park riot and larger national anxieties into the 1971 album *There's A Riot Goin' On*, now considered one of the best albums of all time. A swampy morass of funk grooves and murmured mantras, the album captured a sociopolitical undercurrent that America had long resisted acknowledging: a brew of exhaustion, trauma, resilience, and determined joy bubbling from the country's dispossessed margins. And as America confronts a new era of unrest, there are few albums made today that capture an unyielding spirit that still courses through the country: of dogged individualism and collective civil disobedience.

Future Utopias

Stone was once the avatar of a more peaceful, unified future. In the mid-'60s, when anti-miscegenation laws were still being upheld in many states, he formed Sly and the Family Stone, one of the country's first mainstream racially integrated bands. "There were race riots going on at the time," Greg Errico, the band's white drummer, told *Rolling Stone* in 2015. "Putting a musical group together with male and female and Black and white, to us, it felt really natural and cool and comfortable, but it made a statement that was definitely threatening to some people."

The band's diversity wasn't just skin-deep, but also musical, as they fused funk, rock, soul, and psychedelia into up-tempo anthems with pure, motivational messages: Stand. Dance to the music. Everybody is a star. Their vision of America was a place where all sorts of outdated boundaries could be broken down; they embodied the long arc of the universe bending toward justice.

But in 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered, as was Bobby Kennedy. One day, while the band was on tour and riots were unfolding across the nation, the band was accosted by guardsmen while stopping for gas in a Michigan town under curfew. One of the guardsmen called a white woman in their group a "[*N*-word] lover," and tried to provoke them into resisting, Sly writes in his memoir. "We got out of there without too much trouble, other than all the trouble," he recounts dryly.

As the Vietnam War dragged on and violence inside the country mounted, Sly grew increasingly disillusioned with the nation's trajectory. "You couldn't take turns with freedom. You couldn't have one moment where freedom went with the majority and one where it went with the money and one where it went with one skin color or another," he later recounted. His fame was also taking a toll: plagued by expectations, hangers-on, and feeling used by the industry, he soon turned heavily to drugs and drinking.

The riot begins

Stone channeled all of these discontents into *There's a Riot Goin' On*. It was a far cry from its predecessor *Stand!*, which commanded alertness and action. *There's a Riot*, conversely, was not militaristic, but mutant. It did not press to impress, but forced the listener to

adjust to its oozing pace, its fuzziness, its Blackness. Sly's constant overdubbing and reworking of the tape caused it to disintegrate, giving its sound a gritty veil. On the record, he gasped and murmured, holding too long to opaque phrases, his words seemingly spilling out of a collective unconscious of unrest —"made by no one and everyone, made under the influence of substances and of itself," he later wrote.

The album's provocative title was a reference to several touchpoints: the 1954 song "Riot in Cell Block No. 9" by the Robins, which jubilantly depicts a prison uprising; Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, released earlier in 1971, which lamented war and moral decay; and the Grant Park riot from a year earlier. It also represented, he wrote in his memoir, "the riot that was going on inside each person." On its cover was a modified version of the American flag, suggesting that small and big riots alike had always been part of America's legacy—and that the nation's fabric was changing in fundamental ways.

The album, which confused some reviewers at the time, is now revered as an American classic. The record's bass and drums influenced later funk icons like Parliament Funkadelic, as well as groundbreaking jazz-funk explorations from Miles Davis and Herbie Hancock. Its stripped drum machine sounds created a blueprint for many hip-hop artists. "Listen close, because there's no way in hell a major label will ever again let out this much horrible truth," wrote *Pitchfork*'s Andy Beta while naming it the fourth best album of the '70s.

"Yes, it's the very first funk album," Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson told NPR this year, while promoting his new documentary *Sly Lives! (AKA The Burden Of Black Genius)*. "But for me, it's probably 41 of the most painful documented minutes in a creator's life…I hear someone crying for help, but because the music is so awesome and so mind-blowing, you know, we wind up fetishizing

his art, and you don't see the pain of it or the fact that Black pain is so beautiful."

Read More: *Questlove on* Summer of Soul *and the Oscars*

After making the album, Stone slipped even further into addiction, depression, and paranoia, sometimes going for years at a time without public appearances. But while he may not have been a role model, he was a "real model," he liked to say. And there will never be another album like *There's a Riot Goin' On*, which is the sound of a genius straining against the edges of convention; of a teeming mass fighting for freedom; of love being found in a hopeless place.

In 2023, TIME conducted a written interview with Sly, who was struggling with COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) and near deafness. TIME asked him how the summer of 2020 compared with other summers of protest that he had lived through. "I still watch the news and still think about what could make things better in America," he wrote. "There are days when it feels like things are going in the wrong direction, that every good thing has two bad things behind it. Black and white, rich and poor, we have to find some way to live together without hurting each other. It's not simple but it's important."

Read More: *Sly Stone Reflects on the Past and His New Memoir in a Rare Interview*

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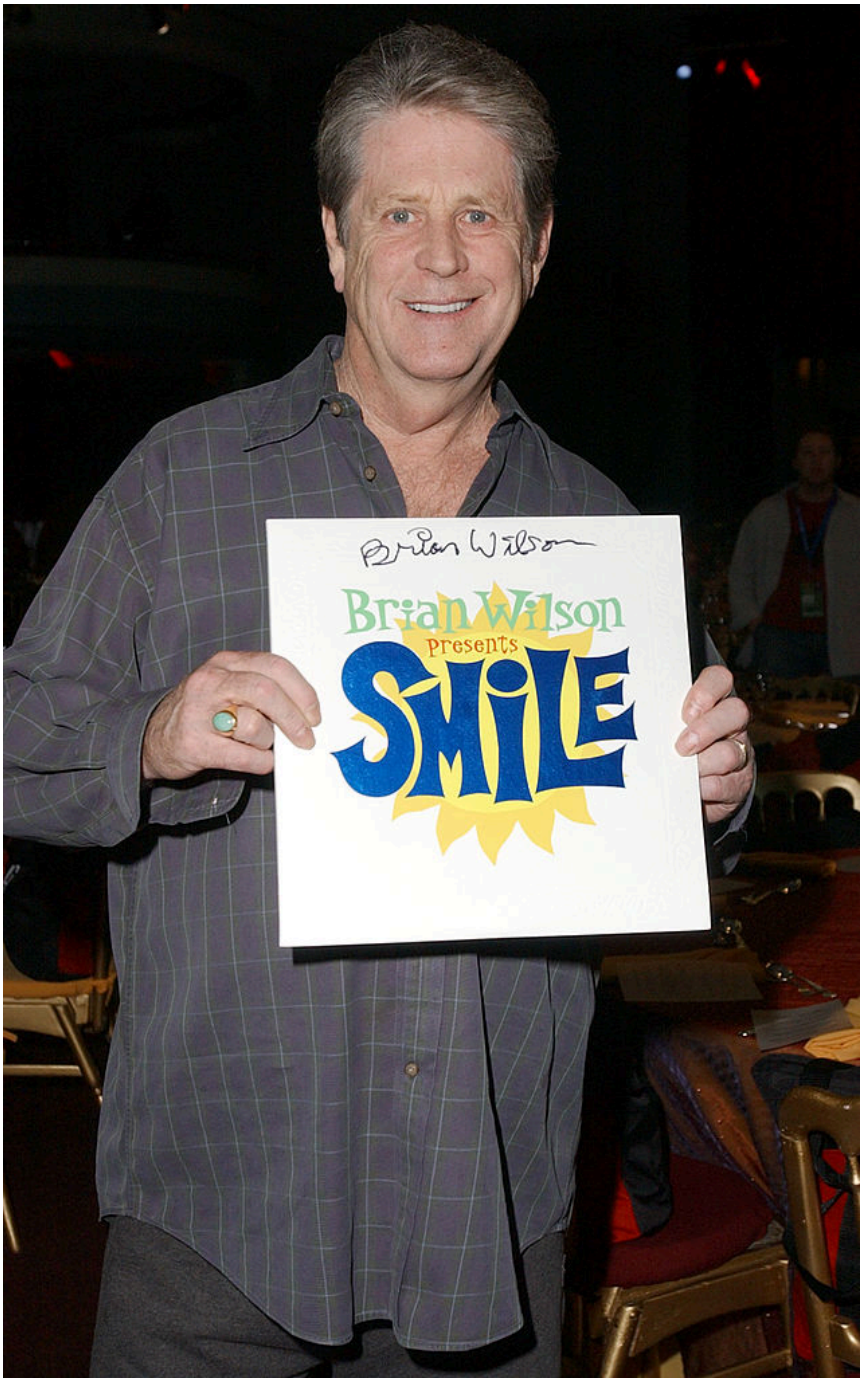
https://time.com/7292771

The Legacy of Brian Wilson's Smile Album

Waxman is a staff writer at TIME in the Entertainment section. She also covers all things History.



The family of Brian Wilson, the co-founder of the Beach Boys, announced on June 11 that he passed away at the age of 82. Wilson

shaped the Beach Boys' timeless sound as the band's songwriter and co-lead vocalist, from the easygoing surf songs of their early days to the more experimental and still influential 1966 album *Pet Sounds*.

Wilson's struggles with mental health issues played a role in the followup to *Pet Sounds*—the unfinished album *Smile*, which the Beach Boys began recording in 1966. Wilson was convinced it would be his masterpiece, but *Smile* wouldn't be released until nearly forty years later.

Here's the complicated backstory behind *Smile*—and how it cemented Wilson's legacy.

Smile's not-so-good vibrations

In describing the followup to *Pet Sounds*, Wilson billed *Smile* as a "teenage symphony to God." He was experimenting with songs like "Brian Falls Into a Microphone," "Love To Say Dada," and "Do You Like Worms."

As part of the brainstorming process, Wilson became reclusive, ordering eight truckloads of beach dumped around his piano at home so that he could wiggle his toes in it and get in the zone to compose, according to the New York *Times.* A lot of mystery came to surround the project, and it only grew when Wilson cancelled the album release in 1967. The *Times* wrote that it “turned into the most famous unheard album in pop history.”

Later in 1967, the Beach Boys released a stripped down version of *Smile*, titled *Smiley Smile*. The band came “nearly undone” by that album, wrote TIME’s Jay Cocks in 1993, and marked the beginning of a decline in their commercial success.

Reaction to *Smile*

But the *Smile* sessions weren't totally for nothing. Over the years, some of the work that Wilson did for *Smile* ended up in Beach Boy hits like "Good Vibrations," "Heroes and Villains," "Surf's Up," "Cabin Essence" and "Wind Chimes." Pieces of the unfinished work drew acclaim. Writing about a *Good Vibrations* box set that included some of Wilson's recordings for *Smile*, Cocks described the works as "unfinished, incomplete and glorious. The music is mystic, mad, wild and gentle, quite unlike anything anyone, including Wilson, had ever tried in pop before."

"The lyrics were as fleeting as a waking dream; the musical tracks were layered as if Wilson were a kid in his room stacking 45-r.p.m. records on top of one another," he wrote. "The songs that resulted seem random at first, off-beam and crazy, but they haunt."

TIME's Bruce Handy also wrote about the joys of discovering a CD of unfinished *Smile* tracks: "I love this CD. I love its raw beauty, but even more, I love its wasted promise. (This is a boy example; girls can substitute Sylvia Plath's burned journals.) I also love the illicit access to Wilson's half-finished thoughts, to Wilson himself."

Wilson finished *Smile* in 2004, and it was "rapturously received," as TIME noted in a 2008 list naming it one of the 10 best comeback albums.

"It was finally ready to be finished, ready to be accepted," he told the New York *Times* that year. Wilson argued that the mid-1960s wasn't the right time to release it, explaining, "We think people are now ready to understand where it was coming from. Back then, no one was ready for it."

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https://time.com/7293375

Doctors Report the First Pregnancy Using a New AI Procedure

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

Doctors at Columbia University Fertility Center have reported what they are calling the first pregnancy using a new AI system, in a couple that had been trying to start a family for nearly two decades.

The pregnancy was possible due to an advance developed by the Columbia team, led by Dr. Zev Williams, director of the center, to address azoospermia, or a lack of detectable sperm in the ejaculate. Male factors account for about 40% of infertility in the U.S., and azoospermia is responsible for about 10% of those cases. Until

recently, there was little doctors could do to address the lack of sperm needed to fertilize an egg, other than using donor sperm.

While to the naked eye, a sperm sample from a man with azoospermia might look normal, the microscope tells a different story, Williams says. Highly trained technicians rarely find any sperm in these samples, which are often filled with other debris. Add to that the fact that sperm are the smallest cell in the body, and it's not surprising that even the best fertility technicians rarely find sperm in azoospermia samples.

That's where AI comes in. Williams and his team spent five years developing a system that combined an AI algorithm for detecting sperm with a fluidic chip that passed the semen sample through a tiny tubule on a plastic chip. If the AI picked up sperm, that tiny portion of semen would be directed to a separate tubule and collected. The few sperm isolated in this way could then be stored, frozen, or used to fertilize an egg.

Called STAR, for Sperm Track and Recovery, the system was inspired by similar approaches that astrophysicists use to enlist AI to detect new stars and planets. "If you can look into a sky that's filled with billions of stars and try to find a new one, or the birth of a new star, then maybe we can use that same approach to look through billions of cells and try to find that one specific one we are looking for," says Williams. In this case, STAR is trained to pick up "really, really, really rare sperm," he says. "I liken it to finding a needle hidden within a thousand haystacks. But it can do that in a couple of hours—and so gently that the sperm that we recover can be used to fertilize an egg."

Read More: *IVF Patients Say a Test Caused Them to Discard Embryos. Now They're Suing*

STAR is distinct from AI systems that have been developed to scan and detect specific features, Williams says, because it combines

that analysis with the ability to also actively isolate the target in question—in this case, any sperm found in a semen sample. The system can scan eight million images in about an hour, and Williams remembers the moment when he was convinced that STAR could become a powerful tool for treating certain forms of infertility. “To test the system, before we discarded samples where embryologists could not find any sperm, we decided to run those samples through the system. The embryologists really worked hard to find sperm, since they didn’t want to be outshone by a machine. In one of the samples they analyzed for two days and found no sperm, STAR found 44 in an hour.”

Rosie and her husband became the first couple to get pregnant using STAR in March 2025. The couple spent nearly 19 years trying to get pregnant, and Rosie—who asked to use a pseudonym to protect her privacy—says their Orthodox Jewish faith kept them hopeful during 15 unsuccessful IVF cycles. Prior to the pregnancy, they had explored multiple options to address her husband’s azoospermia, including surgery and enlisting an expert from overseas to manually analyze and isolate sperm from his samples. They also researched efforts to extract sperm that were more controversial because they involved using chemicals that could potentially be detrimental to the quality of sperm.

“There really was nothing else out there,” says Rosie, 38, of their options before learning about STAR. “Especially because I am running quite a few years ahead of where we should be [for fertility]. I’m not that old, but in fertility years—egg-wise—I was reaching my end.”

They were introduced to Williams and his fertility program through a community group and learned everything they could about the system. “We knew exactly what it was, and knew what they were trying to do,” says Rosie. “If they could get sperm in a more natural way without chemicals and hopefully chose the good ones—if the program was able to do that, we knew we had a better chance.”

Read More: *Why It's So Hard to Have Your Fertility Tested*

For the couple, using STAR did not require any additional testing or procedures; their successful cycle in March proceeded no differently than any of the other IVF cycles they had experienced. "We were keeping our hopes to a minimum after so many disappointments," says Rosie. "We came in, did what we had to do for the cycle, knowing there was probably a very small chance of anything happening. Why should this be any different from every other time?"

Usually in an IVF cycle, there are far more sperm than eggs, says Williams, but in cases of azoospermia, the opposite is true. So to ensure that a couple has the best chance of a pregnancy, Williams and his team collect several batches of sperm using STAR and freeze them. Then they coordinate the mother-to-be's ovulation cycle on IVF, and on the day they retrieve her eggs, they collect a fresh semen sample, run it through STAR, and use any sperm collected to fertilize any available eggs. The frozen sperm serve as backup in case no fresh sperm can be found.

Within two hours after collecting her husband's sperm that March, they learned that Rosie's eggs had been successfully fertilized and were ready to be transferred to her uterus a few days later. "After the transfer, it took me two days to believe I was actually pregnant," says Rosie.

Now four months along, Rosie is receiving standard obstetric care, and all indications are that her pregnancy is proceeding well. "I still wake up in the morning and can't believe if this is true or not," she says. "And I still don't believe [I'm pregnant] until I see the scans."

Williams says azoospermia is only one of many infertility issues that AI could address. "There are things going on that we are blind to right now. But with the introduction of AI, we are being shown what those things are. The dream is to develop technologies so that

those who are told ‘you have no chance of being able to have a child’ can now go on to have healthy children.”

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https://time.com/7291154

How TIME and Statista Determined the World's Most Sustainable Companies of 2025

Statista and TIME have joined forces to identify the World's Most Sustainable Companies of 2025, aiming to highlight corporate responsibility and promote sustainable practices. In an era marked by significant environmental challenges and social inequalities, it is crucial to recognize and reward companies prioritizing sustainability. By featuring these leading entities, the ranking sets a benchmark for other businesses, fostering transparency and accountability and encouraging the integration of sustainability into core corporate strategies.

Methodology

The ranking process began with a comprehensive selection from over 5,000 of the world's largest and most influential companies, considering factors such as revenue, market capitalization, and public prominence. The process involved a rigorous 4-step methodology to identify the top 500 companies, evaluated on more than 20 key data points.

Exclusion of Non-Sustainable Businesses: The first step excluded companies involved in non-sustainable industries like fossil fuels or deforestation. Additionally, companies appearing on negative lists related to sustainability issues, such as those identified as carbon majors or associated with environmental catastrophes, were automatically disqualified. These include: Forest 500 Report (based on 2023 data), Carbon Majors (based on 2023 data), PERI Top 100 Polluter Indexes: Air, Water, Greenhouse, Toxic Greenhouse, Suppliers, Coal (based on 2022 data.)

This step also considered significant scandals or controversies related to sustainability.

Commitment & Ratings: The second step involved assessing companies based on external sustainability ratings and commitments from reputable organizations. Key criteria included CDP ratings, adherence to the UN Global Compact, alignment with the Science Based Targets initiative (near-term and long-term), inclusion in the S&P Global Sustainability Yearbook, participation in the UNFCCC Race to Zero campaign, and MSCI ESG & SRI evaluations.

Reporting & Transparency: The third step evaluated the availability and quality of sustainability reports. This included verifying whether companies published an ESG report for 2023, ensuring these reports had undergone external assurance, and assessing compliance with international reporting standards such as GRI, SASB, and TCFD (now part of the IFRS/ISSB standards).

Environmental & Social Stewardship: The final step involved researching various environmental and social Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from companies' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports. Environmental metrics included emission intensity, emission intensity reduction, energy intensity, renewable energy ratio, waste intensity and the proportion of recycled waste.

Social metrics covered aspects like gender diversity on the board of directors and in leadership, gender pay gap, work safety, and employee turnover.

An overall sustainability score was calculated, with a maximum achievable score of 100. The top 500 companies with the highest scores were awarded the title of World's Most Sustainable Companies 2025. These companies are spread across more than 30 countries, with the United States, Japan, and France hosting the highest numbers.

See the full list here.

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https://time.com/7296709

10 Things to Say When Someone Won’t Get Off Their Phone

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

Trying to talk to someone stuck on their phone is such a universal experience, there’s a name for it: “phubbing,” short for “phone snubbing,” or ignoring someone in favor of a phone. “Everyone hates it, but everyone has also done it,” says Jean Twenge, a professor of psychology at San Diego State University and author of the upcoming book *10 Rules for Raising Kids in a High-Tech World*. “When someone phubs you, you feel like you’re not important—that whatever is on their phone is more important than you.”

Phubbing negatively affects mental health, relationship satisfaction, and overall well-being. That’s why it’s worth speaking up about digital distraction. “It’s challenging and awkward, but we should be doing this,” Twenge says. “We need to be confronting this situation.”

Here’s exactly what to say when the person you’re trying to talk to won’t get off their phone.

“I’ve got a group chat that’s blowing up right now, but I’d rather talk to you without getting distracted. Can we put our phones away in our bags?”

A couple years ago, Twenge heard about a group of women who pushed their phones into the center of the table when they went out to dinner. The first person to reach for her device had to foot the bill. That’s a clever approach, Twenge says, but you don’t even need to put a financial spin on it: Instead, propose you all drop your phones somewhere out of sight, like in your bags.

Read More: *What to Say When You Forget Someone’s Name*

Twenge likes this phrasing because it isn’t accusatory: “It’s a subtle way to get across the message of, ‘Hey, we all have stuff going on on our phones, but I want to talk to you right now,’” she says. “It’s a very polite way of saying, ‘I want us to focus on this conversation.’”

“Is everything OK?”

This question allows for the possibility that there’s an emergency—while implying that, if there’s not, it would be better to put the phone down. It might feel slightly confrontational, Twenge says, but it’s better than snapping at the other person to get off their device. “You have to find a way to thread that needle of acknowledging that there might be something important going on,” she says. “But it is a call out.”

“Anything interesting on there you can share with me?”

This is a way to get someone talking about what’s on their phone—and, as a result, to look up from said device. Do people typically share, or simply take it as a reminder to be more present? “I’ve seen it go both ways,” Twenge says. “Sometimes it’s just a text exchange with someone else, but every once in a while, it’ll be like, ‘Look at this really funny video,’ or ‘Here’s this fun picture somebody sent me.’ Either way, the idea is to draw them back into the in-person conversation.”

“Is now a good time to talk, or should I come back when you’re done?”

This approach is direct but still respectful. It calls attention to the fact that the other person is clearly distracted, without demanding anything from them, says Tessa Stuckey, a therapist and founder of Project LookUp, a nonprofit that helps families build healthier screen habits. “It gives them autonomy, while also honoring your own needs,” she says. She’s found that making her conversation partner aware that she’s noticed they’re not fully present is often all it takes to prompt a reset.

Read More: *How to Reconnect With People You Care About*

“I miss you when you’re on your phone.”

Telling someone you miss them comes from a place of vulnerability, not blame—and Stuckey likes that it’s almost guaranteed to tug on your friend’s heartstrings. “You’re expressing that the phone is creating distance, and that you want connection,” she says. Plus, it invites empathy: Most people don’t realize how their screen use is affecting others until it’s pointed out gently. The

trick, Stuckey adds, is to say it warmly, with sincerity, so it feels like an emotional nudge rather than a guilt trip.

“Can we take a 10-minute phone break? I really want to catch up.”

Asking someone to put their phone away for such a short amount of time is realistic—it’s a very doable break, Stuckey says. You’re not asking them to disconnect forever; rather, you’re inviting a shared moment. “People are more likely to unplug when there’s a clear time boundary and a good reason,” she says. Plus, it’s collaborative, almost like you’re proposing a team challenge.

Read More: *The Worst Way to Reply to a Party Invite*

“Hey friend, let’s reconnect.”

Seven years ago, when Seán Killingsworth was in high school, he struggled with excessive screen time so much, he traded his smartphone for a flip phone. It worked—he felt happier and more present—but his peers were still glued to their phones, so he took things a step further and started Reconnect, a group that now hosts phone-free events on college campuses throughout the U.S.

Ideally, more opportunities for phone-free socializing would exist. But in lieu of formal options, Killingsworth recommends bringing up the concept to your friends: “We should try hanging out without our phones sometime.” Talk through why being present with each other matters. Then, the next time you notice your buddies are more focused on Facebook than your face, issue a gentle reminder.

“These moments with you really matter to me.”

If you’re at dinner with friends, or are spending quality time with a family member you don’t get to see often, consider calling

attention to the significance of the moment. You could even follow up by adding: “I’d hate to look back and feel like we missed out because of our screens,” suggests Dr. James Sherer, a psychiatrist who treats addiction and co-editor of the *Technological Addictions* textbook for the American Psychiatric Association. “It can be very powerful,” he says, and lead to meaningful improvements in relationship quality.

Read More: *How to Say ‘I Told You So’ in a More Effective Way*

“I’ve noticed that when we’re together, you’re on TikTok quite frequently, and that makes me feel like I’m being ignored.”

Focusing on the way someone’s phone usage makes you feel can be more effective than “instigatory” comments, Sherer says. You’re not going to get very far by barking, “You’re always on TikTok! You don’t care about me!” Highlighting your own observations and how someone’s behavior makes you feel, however, plants a seed that can encourage them to reevaluate their habits. “The most important thing is to approach it from a position of being nonjudgmental,” he says. “You’re not there to dog pile on the person.”

“Muskrat!”

Stuckey’s son was 8 the Christmas morning when he noticed certain family members were paying more attention to their phones than watching him open his presents. He came up with an idea: The family could designate a silly code word they called out every time they wanted to signal it was time to drop the devices and be present in their surroundings.

More than five years later, the family still uses their word (“muskrat”). “What I love about it is my kids can call us out using

that word," Stuckey says. "We can call them out with that word. They've grown up with it. It makes people check themselves a little bit and say, 'OK, I'll put it down in a moment—I just have to finish this email really quick.'"

Wondering what to say in a tricky social situation? Email timetotalk@time.com

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https://time.com/7290463

I Was Once Undocumented. Now I'm a Superintendent Speaking Out Against Trump's Immigration Raids

Carvalho, four-time national Superintendent of the Year award recipient, has served as the Superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District since February 2022. He previously served as the Superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools for nearly 14 years where his transformational leadership was recognized at the state, national, and international levels.

I am the leader of the second-largest public school system in the country. I am also a proud American—and once, I was an undocumented immigrant.

My journey to citizenship is not just a personal story; it is a story that deeply informs how I lead, how I teach, and how I serve the over 520,000 students who attend Los Angeles Unified schools. This country gave me the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to give back. I became an educator because I believe in the promise of public education. And I became a superintendent to protect it.

This week, I cheered as our youngest students culminated from Kindergarten and crossed their first academic finish lines. They were celebrated, beamed with pride, and hugged the teachers who helped them grow. In those moments, I saw the future: bright, diverse, and full of possibility.

But in the same week, I also stood beside families gripped with fear. Some of them have lived in our city for decades. Some arrived more recently, escaping violence, persecution, and poverty. All of them have entrusted their children to our care. And now, many of them are facing the unimaginable.

In recent months, the federal government has sent immigration agents into our communities—sometimes directly to or near schools. They have questioned parents and, in some cases, spoken with students. Federal immigration agents have driven through neighborhoods with visible tactical gear and vehicles and set up checkpoints outside of workplaces. And this weekend, the National Guard was deployed in our city.

To be clear: no preschooler, no first grader, no high school sophomore on their way to class poses any risk to the national security of the United States. And yet, the response we are seeing looks more like a military operation than an immigration process. The result is widespread trauma, fear, and distrust—particularly in our schools, where children should feel safest.

We are hearing reports of families hiding in their homes. Students too afraid to come to school. Parents who feel they must choose between a child's education and the risk of detention. These are not hypotheticals. They are the lived experiences of students and families in my district.

Los Angeles Unified schools are—and will remain—safe and welcoming spaces for every child, regardless of immigration status. That is not just our commitment, it is the law. The U.S. Supreme

Court has held for over four decades that every child, regardless of citizenship, has a constitutional right to a free public education. That means our doors stay open. No child should miss school because of fear.

Still, I would be lying if I said fear doesn't exist. And that is precisely why superintendents—and all leaders—must speak up now.

School is not just a place to learn reading, math, and science. It is also the place where students receive food, mental health resources, and physical care. Schools are the heart of a community. For many children, it is the only place where they feel truly safe, truly seen. When federal actions create chaos outside our school gates, it is our responsibility to speak out and protect the sanctity of what happens inside them.

As a former undocumented immigrant, I know this fear. I have felt it. I have lived with the uncertainty of whether a knock at the door meant separation from everything I loved. I also know what it means to be given a chance—to study, to contribute, to lead. And that makes what's happening in our communities now all the more painful. Because these children, these families, are just like I once was.

The question now is: What kind of country do we want to be?

I believe we must be a nation that protects children before politics. A nation that recognizes education not as a bargaining chip, but as a birthright. A nation that honors the incredible courage and contributions of immigrant families who are the backbone of our workforce, our schools, and our future.

We need federal policies that are humane, lawful, and consistent with our values. That means halting enforcement actions near schools and community centers. It means clear communication

with local jurisdictions. It means permanent protections for Dreamers and long-term immigration reform grounded in dignity and opportunity—not fear.

Locally, we must continue investing in services that support our students: mental health care, trauma-informed counseling, family legal support, and robust outreach so that families know their rights and know they are not alone.

And to the voters reading this: your voice matters. We cannot build a just education system without a just immigration system. The next election, at every level, will help decide whether our schools remain sanctuaries of learning or become battlegrounds for political theater.

As superintendent, my charge is clear: I will do everything in my power to make sure every child—documented or not—feels safe, supported, and seen in our schools. Because the future of this country sits in our classrooms every day. And how we treat them will define who we are and what happens next in our nation.

We can choose fear. Or we can choose hope.

I know what I choose. Do you?

More from TIME

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https://time.com/7292641

How Poland's Next President Will Boost the Far Right

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

The presidential election in Poland delivered the latest anti-incumbent surprise in what has been a tough period for establishment candidates the world over. The right-wing populist Karol Nawrocki, a historian with no political experience, won a narrow victory in a June 1 run-off vote over a candidate aligned with the centrist Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his plans for closer European integration. Nawrocki will take office on Aug. 6. Tusk must now buckle up for a bumpy ride.

With a presidential veto, Nawrocki will halt Tusk's bid to liberalize abortion law and to overhaul a courts system packed with judges

politically aligned with the previous far-right government led by the Law and Justice Party (PiS), a change demanded by the European Union. But Nawrocki won't just block Tusk's reform plans. He'll also work to exploit potential divisions within Tusk's four-party governing coalition, particularly among lawmakers in the conservative Polish People's Party, still the weakest link in Tusk's alliance.

Read More: *Polish Women Fight Back Against Restrictive Abortion Laws*

In fact, the one-point presidential election loss for his ally Rafal Trzaskowski leaves Prime Minister Tusk as a lame duck, and it underlines the growing frustration of many Poles with a rising cost of living and the now long-term presence of up to 2.5 million Ukrainian refugees across the country. While support for Ukraine's defense and fear and loathing of Russia span most of Poland's political spectrum, a sluggish economy leaves many feeling Ukrainians should return home. A recent survery by Poland's Centre for Public Opinion Research found that support for accepting Ukrainian refugees dropped from 81% in early 2023 to just 50% in March. Nawrocki's ability to block Tusk's agenda will leave more voters fed up with Tusk's government, boosting right and far-right parties ahead of parliamentary elections in 2027.

It hasn't been all bad news for Tusk. He comfortably survived a no-confidence vote on June 11. He'll now make changes to the government itself, and focus only on the more broadly popular policies. Tusk will likely downsize the number of ministries, particularly for economic management, and placate key coalition partners with important new jobs. His government will prioritize social policies and new subsidies to take some of the edge off voters anxieties over Poland's economy, push plans to make housing more affordable, and avoid policies they know the new President will veto. Tusk's party will also try to undercut the right's hold on anti-immigration sentiment by focusing on border

protection tougher laws. Even before the election, Tusk pushed through a temporary suspension of the right to asylum, bringing his government closer to the anti-immigrant positions of the far-right.

But these are coping tactics, not a roadmap to winning the next elections. Its political base expects Tusk's Civic Platform party to loosen abortion restrictions. (Since 2021, Polish law permit abortion only in cases of rape, incest, or the serious threat to a woman's life or health.) His supporters also want him to restore rule of law in the country after the previous PiS government undermined the independence of some of Poland's political institutions. But "elections have consequences," as Dick Cheney, the U.S. Vice President now in the political wilderness, once said. Nawrocki will use the powers of the presidency to undermine Tusk on the European stage. He can't make foreign or security policy, but he can use his political alignment with Donald Trump and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, as well as criticism of E.U. conformity, to remind leaders across Europe that Poland remains a polarized place and a shaky long-term bet for closer alignment with the bloc's policies and political values.

In particular, support for neighboring Ukraine and its European aspirations will face new hurdles. Though Nawrocki supports Ukraine's war effort, he opposes E.U. and NATO membership for Ukraine and will push for cuts to benefits to Ukrainian refugees still in Poland. The new President won't have the power to create policy himself, but his willingness to criticize increasingly unpopular pro-Ukraine measures will make life much more difficult—for Ukrainians and for Tusk.

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https://time.com/7295966

I Teach U.S. History at Harvard. Here's What Donald Trump Gets Wrong About Our Past

Kloppenberg is the Charles Warren Research Professor of American History at Harvard University and the author of *Toward Democracy: The Struggle for Self-Rule in European and American Thought*.

I am a history professor at one of the universities under attack by the Trump Administration. I am also a flag-waving patriot with an abiding love of the United States.

Those two statements might seem surprising, or contradictory, if you do not know what has happened to the teaching and writing of American history in the last fifty years. According to the executive order President Donald Trump issued earlier this year, historians have rewritten American history and replaced "objective facts with a distorted narrative driven by ideology rather than truth."

That's not true. There has been a change, but it has been driven by facts rather than ideology. Why do historical interpretations change? We expect medicine to make progress thanks to new

scientific research, but isn't the past *over?* No, it isn't. In the middle of the twentieth century, understandably proud of America's indispensable role in defeating totalitarian autocracy, historians tended to emphasize our nation's undeniable achievements. Especially since the 1960s, in part because of the Black freedom struggle, feminism, and other social movements that challenged prevailing distributions of power in the Unted States, historians have been asking different questions and probing other dimensions of our past. Combining old and new methods, including the discovery of previously unknown sources and the use of statistical analysis, historians digging in the archives have uncovered solid evidence concerning the expansion of freedom for many Americans and the denial of freedom for many others. The experiences of enslaved Africans, women, indigenous people, ordinary soldiers, owners of small businesses, and countless other Americans have emerged from a generation's painstaking research into a new light.

Historians have delivered these truths to the public with the understanding that our entire history should be known. Such knowledge, fully consistent with patriotism, provides an indispensable foundation for debates about contemporary issues. We should, of course, tell stories about the undeniable virtue and valor so many Americans have shown. But to see American history as simply a narrative of heroism would be a lie unbecoming a great nation.

What are historical facts? It is not so simple. Fans of vintage television will remember Sergeant Joe Friday, who insisted that witnesses give him "just the facts." That is one way to see history– as nothing but an unvarnished chronicle of what happened. But history, like life, is more complicated. From the almost infinite array of information historical actors leave behind them, historians put together interpretations consistent with recognized rules of evidence and reasoning. No generation of scholars can escape the intellectual climate of their own time, and the upheavals in recent decades have reshaped historians' questions and their answers to

those questions. Critically engaging with the prejudices of the present as well as those of the past is central to historians' role. For decades, historians have been working to provide the public with knowledge about our history grounded in hard facts, knowledge that the president's order wrongly characterizes as the product of unprofessional bias.

The integrity of historical scholarship is crucial in a democracy. Articles appear in scholarly journals, and books are published by university presses, only after a rigorous, double-blind review process. The identities of authors and reviewers are masked to ensure that the evidence and reasoning meet the profession's highest standards. Fiery critiques are subject to equally fiery responses from members of the historical profession, who insist that passion cannot take the place of carefully marshaled evidence. That is as it should be. If the pendulum has swung too far toward critique and away from acknowledging progress, and a new balance must be struck, that work must be done by conscientious scholars and teachers, not by political partisans who clamor for "viewpoint diversity" while trying to impose their own views on all Americans.

The executive order contends that "revisionist" historians present the American past as "inherently racist, sexist, oppressive, or otherwise irredeemably flawed." One-sided judgments, whether celebrations or condemnations, are met by dissent within the profession. Errors and misjudgments should be identified and corrected, however, not by government officials who demand a particular narrative of our nation's past but by scholars and teachers adhering to the profession's demanding standards. Historical facts never speak for themselves. Historians must always balance their own convictions, and their own aspirations for our nation's future, against the available evidence. Although entitled to their opinions, historians are never entitled to their own facts.

The idea that there are no objective facts, only perceptions, has gained currency in recent decades. Our current president told more than 30,000 documented lies during his first term in office, and he shows no sign of slowing down. Historians cannot permit that approach to our nation's past. Politicians' attempts to police our publications, our classrooms, or our museums must fail. We must defend the integrity and independence of historical scholarship. Telling Americans only those parts of our complicated history consistent with preconceived notions of American grandeur is unacceptable to everyone who cherishes our nation and its history. Otherwise we approach the nightmare world of Stalin's Soviet Union or George Orwell's *1984*, where truth is whatever people in power say it is.

Historians bear a responsibility to craft accounts of our nation's past firmly grounded in evidence. Without reliable history, Americans cannot know that our Constitution, framed by a generation that fought a bloody war against monarchy 250 years ago, erected sturdy barriers protecting us against executive overreach. Without reliable history, Americans cannot know that the judiciary has a duty to protect those barriers at a time when the majority in Congress has abdicated its responsibility to rein in this president's unconstitutional and illegal actions. The stories we tell ourselves as a nation must be consistent with objective facts, but they should also be consistent with our democratic ideals, our commitments not only to liberty and individual rights but also to equality and justice for all.

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https://time.com/7289027

Where Iran’s Nuclear Program Goes From Here

Popli is a political reporter at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C., bureau, where he covers Congress and the White House. In 2025, he was selected for the National Press Foundation’s Paul Miller Washington Reporting Fellowship.

Deep beneath the Zagros Mountains in central Iran, in a labyrinth of fortified tunnels outside the city of Natanz, centrifuges spun at speeds too fast for the eye to track. The cascade of machines, arranged in long halls and shielded by concrete and steel, have been central to Iran’s most sensitive nuclear work, and, until recently, largely immune to airstrikes.

But in June, Israeli and U.S. warplanes penetrated Iranian airspace and struck multiple nuclear sites, including underground facilities thought to be untouchable. President Donald Trump said that U.S. bombers had “totally obliterated” three key Iranian nuclear sites. While the extent of the damage remains unclear, initial assessments suggest Iran’s nuclear infrastructure suffered its most significant blow in over a decade.

The Israeli-U.S. strikes blew up the uneasy nuclear status quo that existed in the Middle East for years while raising a daunting question: What happens if Iran decides that the only true deterrent is to build a bomb?

Read more: *A New Middle East Is Unfolding Before Our Eyes*

For over a decade, Tehran has operated just below the threshold of nuclear breakout capability. But this spring it abandoned that restraint. The International Atomic Energy Agency reported in May that Iran had accumulated roughly 120 kg of uranium enriched to 60%—dangerously close to weapons-grade levels of 90%—and enough to build 22 nuclear bombs within five months if further enriched. At the same time, Iran began building a third enrichment hall on top of the two already in use. U.S. officials saw it as a provocation; Israel viewed it as a casus belli.

Israeli and U.S. officials described their military strikes as pre-emptive operations to cripple Iran's ability to build a nuclear weapon by targeting its main enrichment sites, nuclear scientists, and military officials.

But while the strikes disrupted Iran's enrichment operations, it retains scientific expertise and stockpiled material, and now

possesses a stronger incentive to bury its program even deeper. “If Iran survives the conflict, they could decide that a nuclear weapon is the only way to have deterrence,” says Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

Concerns that Iran could attempt a dash for a nuclear weapon played a role in Trump’s decision to target Fordo, a nuclear site buried so deeply in mountains near the city of Qum that only the U.S.’s most powerful bunker-busting bomb—the 30,000-lb. GBU-57—is believed capable of reaching it.

Even before the U.S. bombings, diplomatic efforts to constrain Iran’s program were already on the verge of collapse. “Trying to get to a deal now is infinitely harder than it used to be,” says Richard Nephew, who worked on Iran sanctions in the Obama Administration. Others are more hopeful about the outcome of the war. Says Matt Kroenig of the Atlantic Council: “We were on the verge of Iran becoming a nuclear power, and it looks like now we’ve set that threat into the future.”

Update, June 22, 2025:

This story was updated to reflect breaking news.

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https://time.com/7295632

Trump Campaigned on Staying Out of Wars. Now He's Changing His Tune on Iran

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.

When President Donald Trump ducked out early from a meeting with G-7 nations in the Canadian mountain resort of Kananaskis on June 16, he said he needed to get back to Washington as strikes escalated between Israel and Iran. He didn't like relying on phone calls, he told reporters on Air Force One, and he wanted to be a "little bit, I think, more well versed." For the normally freewheeling Trump, it was a sign of the gravity of the moment, a rare acknowledgment that he didn't have enough information to handle a hair-trigger situation.

The stakes for America are high. Backed into a corner by Israel and U.S. attacks, Tehran could decide to turn its proxy terrorist forces against the U.S. in the region and beyond. The strategic

rapprochement between Israel and Arab states hangs in the balance as conflict threatens to spread. More broadly, the outcome of the war could decide whether the U.S. commits another generation of troops to the Middle East, once again diverting American might from countering China's expansion in the Pacific.

At the same time, an Israeli defeat of Iran could open a new era of Arab-Israeli cooperation, defang Tehran's regional militias, and deliver a blow to China, which had sought to bolster Tehran as a regional counterweight to the U.S. "You've got this axis with Beijing at the core," argues Matthew Pottinger, former Deputy National Security Adviser during Trump's first term.

Read more: *A New Middle East Is Unfolding Before Our Eyes*

The U.S. could tip the balance either way, but Trump is constrained in how he manages the conflict. It's been four years since the disastrous U.S. pullout from Afghanistan. Trump campaigned on not getting the U.S. into more wars, and some of the fiercest opposition to further entanglement is coming from his own MAGA base.

Trump has already sent B-2 bombers to hit Iranian nuclear sites and beefed up the U.S. military presence in the region, ordering another

guided-missile destroyer to the waters off Israel and directing the U.S. aircraft carrier *Nimitz* and its strike group to change course in the Pacific and motor toward the Arabian Sea.

Read more: *How Netanyahu Pushed Trump Toward War*

Iran sits at one of the world's most important strategic crossroads. Nearly one-third of the world's crude-oil production passes through the Strait of Hormuz—and within 30 miles of Iran's coastline. Tanker ships have been warned to sail closer to the coast of Oman, on the western side of the strait. Amid the massive military mobilization, maritime alerts are warning shipping vessels that "electronic interference" could jam their navigation equipment.

For Trump, a direct Iranian attack on the U.S. would trigger a military response. Iran ordered an assassination attempt against Trump and tried to kill an Iranian American journalist living in Brooklyn. "The fact that they have been open in these threats tells me they don't believe they are facing credible retaliatory risk from the United States," Pottinger says. "The Israeli strikes might inject some reality into their calculus. But Iranians have been known to miscalculate on many occasions."

After his return to Washington, Trump issued more hostile rhetoric. He called for Iran's "unconditional surrender" and chastised its leaders for not taking talks more seriously. "Why didn't you negotiate with me two weeks ago? You could have done fine. You would have had a country," he said. Then he sent in the bombers. Now all bets are off for Iran, and the U.S.

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How Netanyahu Pushed Trump Toward War

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

Through a mixture of audacity, ruthlessness, and luck, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has upended the balance of power between Israel and Iran, its most threatening regional adversary, and remade the Middle East in just 20 months. But his most important victory may prove to have been winning over President Donald Trump on the need to attack Tehran with the full force of the Israeli military.

Netanyahu's success in bringing Trump on board can be traced to a series of strategic decisions, according to two Israeli officials involved in talks between the two sides. The initial step came on Feb. 4, when the Israeli Prime Minister visited the White House for the first time since Trump returned to office. Sitting around the long table in the Cabinet Room, Netanyahu reminded Trump that Iran had plotted to assassinate him, according to one of the officials who attended the meeting. He then went through a detailed slide

deck outlining how, in his view, Iran was inching closer to crossing the nuclear threshold: increasing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and advancing its centrifuge technology. “Look, Donald,” Netanyahu said, “this has to be tackled, because they’re racing forward.” He then paused for dramatic effect and looked Trump directly in the eye. “You can’t have a nuclear Iran on your watch.”

It seemed to make an impression. But Trump was plainly not prepared to bless a direct Israeli attack on Iran. He said he wanted to try diplomacy first. He had been elected, after all, on the promise to end wars, not start them. And he had tapped his longtime friend, the real estate mogul Steve Witkoff, to broker a deal with Tehran. “Let’s go for talks,” he told Netanyahu, according to the official who was present.

Reluctantly, Netanyahu said he would give Trump the time and space to see if an agreement was possible. Eventually, Trump’s team settled on a 60-day framework to solidify the contours of an accord. Israeli officials say that letting talks run to the deadline was crucial because when Iran blew past it, Trump became comfortable with Israel’s proposed military plans. “It proved to Trump that we have nobody to talk to,” the official tells TIME, that “it was a ruse on the part of the Iranians.”

So say the Israelis. But Trump has yet to fully explain his sharp shift in posture, from determined dealmaker to participant in the attack on Tehran. The White House did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Just weeks ago, Trump acknowledged that he had warned Netanyahu against military action while -diplomacy continued. Yet as talks unfolded, Netanyahu was preparing plans for a full-scale attack on Iran’s nuclear capabilities. He got some help along the way. On May 31, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran was concealing its development of nuclear material, a violation of a 2019 agreement with the agency. The Israelis then

shared intelligence with Trump that they claimed showed that Iran was intentionally delaying talks to secretly acquire the parts for a nuclear arsenal, according to the Israeli officials. “They were using these talks with Steve to advance to a point where they’d be able to say, ‘We’re there, we’re a day away,’” one official says.

Not all Americans were convinced. The U.S. intelligence agencies believed, as Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard told Congress in March, that Tehran had not decided to build a bomb. But once Trump’s 60-day window had closed, the Israelis seized on the President’s frustrations. Iran was on the cusp of being able to have a nuclear weapon in a matter of months, they said. The Israelis informed the Americans that they would strike Iranian targets in the early morning. Within hours, Iran struck back, killing three civilians in central Israel. But soon Israel managed to establish supremacy over Iran’s airspace. “In two days, we’ve eliminated a third of their arsenal,” says Mascha Michelson, an IDF spokesperson.

Trump officials say ideally Tehran will return to the negotiating table and accept a permanent end to its nuclear program. Some of Trump’s allies, including Stephen Bannon and Tucker Carlson, fear that Israel will have dragged the U.S. military into a protracted conflict.

Israel’s endgame remains unknown. Netanyahu has said that his goal is not regime change but that it could happen. Even the Prime Minister’s aides aren’t sure what the final outcome will be, but they are preparing for more war. “There’s been a number of surprises that we pulled off,” says one of the officials. “There are probably some more surprises that we have up our sleeve.”

Either way, it appears Netanyahu has succeeded in winning Trump over to his view of Iran’s nuclear ambitions. When asked on June 17 about Gabbard’s testimony, Trump responded, “I don’t care what she said. I think they were very close.”

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How Iran Became Isolated in the Middle East

Lina Khatib is an associate fellow at Chatham House's MENA program and a visiting scholar at Harvard Kennedy School's Middle East Initiative

It is a perilous moment for Iran. Israel has gained control of the skies. Much of the regime's top military command has been taken out, to say nothing of the civilian toll. U.S. President Donald Trump has called for an "unconditional surrender."

The Islamic Republic hopes it can persuade the Gulf Arab states to help bring an end to the ongoing military campaign against it. But it is a lost cause. The regime has no true friends in the region—and it has itself to blame.

For almost five decades, the ayatollahs have pursued an expansionist policy of "exporting the revolution" and "forward defense." But what Iran thought was a winning strategy to consolidate long-term leadership in the Middle East has backfired.

Iran's rise was based on exploiting issues like the Palestine question and the marginalization of Lebanon's Shi'ites. Iran's model presented Tehran as a mentor and patron, incubating armed groups under the pretext of fighting just causes. In reality, Iran's proxies relied on the same oppressive behavior as that of the Tehran regime.

For years, Iran's strategy appeared to be working. Iran-backed groups became the strongest actors in their countries. The seeming success of Lebanese Hezbollah—the first proxy Iran nurtured—became a template for others in the Middle East.

Read more: *A New Middle East Is Unfolding Before Our Eyes*

But the expansion of proxies created vulnerabilities for Iran and its assets. With no domestic space for critique, and the suppression of outside opponents, there were no checks on the regime's behavior. Tehran grew blind to its brittleness, believing that it could outmaneuver the U.S., Israel, the Arab countries, and the international community. This included negotiating an international nuclear deal while it was enriching uranium beyond the level necessary for civilian use and thinking it could withstand the consequences of Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel.

Blindness also led Tehran to overestimate its friendship with Russia and China. Tehran saw Moscow as an ally when it intervened to prop up Syria's Assad regime in 2015. But Russia saw instead an opportunity to grow its influence in that country, consolidate its military presence on the Mediterranean, and stand up to the West. Iran and China, for their part, struck a 25-year cooperation deal in 2021. But what Tehran viewed as rising global sway, China saw as a limited economic pact. Beijing subsequently stalled the agreement's delivery.

Today, neither Russia nor China will come to Iran's rescue. Beijing has always avoided getting involved in Middle East conflicts, and

remains focused on its Indo-Pacific backyard. Moscow is bogged down in Ukraine and is prioritizing the yearslong conflict there, which has only escalated in recent months.

Nor will Iran's proxies save it. Israel has decapitated Hezbollah's leadership and destroyed much of its missile arsenal, and the group would lose much of its remaining domestic support if it drags Lebanon into another war. The scale of the Houthis' remaining arsenal in Yemen remains a mystery, following a monthslong campaign of U.S. airstrikes, but they are constrained by de-escalation deals with Washington and Riyadh. Most of the Iran-backed Iraqi factions are also choosing self-preservation over involvement in an unwinnable battle with Israel and the U.S. Meanwhile, Syria has turned from a fertile ground to a hostile one for Iran and its assets, after the Assad regime was toppled in December.

Israel has framed its war on Iran as a boost to regional and global stability. Both the U.S. and Israel want the mission achieved. And while the Arab Gulf states have pursued rapprochement in recent years with Iran, and are calling for de-escalation, that is largely a symbolic gesture. They will ultimately not stand in the way of a new Middle East and a weakened Iran.

The regime, it seems, may be taking its last breaths, and has no one to turn to.

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The Man Who Wants to Save NATO

Rasmi is a senior editor at TIME.

The Brief June 20, 2025

Updates on the U.S. and Iran, a profile of the man who wants to save NATO, and more

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NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte keeps a variety of mementos in his office. There is a sprawling photograph of the North Sea from the vantage point of his hometown in the Netherlands, a kanji gift from Japan's Minister of Defense, and a framed floral embroidery that reads "In Unity is Strength" in Cyrillic with the

stitched flags of NATO, Ukraine, and the E.U. But the room's largest ornamental feature is the blue-and-white map of the world that looms above his conference desk. "In the past, I was responsible for this," the former Dutch Prime Minister says, pointing to his tiny home country in the northwestern corner of Europe. He extends his arms out to encircle the entire Western defense alliance that is home to 1 billion people. "And now …" he says, with a wry laugh.

It's a glimpse of the storms roiling beneath the optimism of the preternaturally cheerful Rutte. We are in the steel and glass NATO HQ on the outskirts of Brussels, completed eight years ago at a cost of $1.3 billion, its interlocking buildings meant to evoke fingers clasped together in unity. But on this balmy May afternoon, five weeks before a critical summit with the mercurial U.S. President Donald Trump and dozens of other leaders, the question of unity hangs over the alliance. "It is really a pivotal moment," Rutte says, after we sit down in his office, some six short months after he became Secretary-General in October.

"Pivotal" may be an understatement. Trump has repeatedly said, most recently in March, that he's "not going to defend" NATO allies that don't spend enough on their militaries, a threat to the mutual defense commitment at the heart of the alliance. Europeans, awakened to the danger of American inconstancy, are scrambling to spend trillions more on defense in coming years. All the while, Russia's assault on Ukraine grows deadlier by the month, and intelligence from the Baltic states, Denmark, and Germany suggests Moscow could rebuild its armed forces and attack NATO members Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania within a few years.

Rutte, 58, brings an idiosyncratic mix of experience and personality to the job of saving the alliance. An amateur concert pianist and part-time high school social-studies teacher, the center-right politician was the longest-serving Dutch Prime Minister in history. In that role, he developed a talent for working with people from across the political spectrum in the Netherlands, Europe, and the U.S. He even gained a reputation as something of a Trump whisperer.

Rutte has used those skills while shuttling between European capitals and Washington, D.C., to push for a new defense-spending target of 5% of GDP for NATO members. The goal, set by the Trump Administration, is a stretch: about a quarter of the allies last year failed to reach the current target of 2%.

Lurking behind the numbers are hard questions about what European and Canadian allies are capable of on the battlefield. For decades, NATO has depended on the U.S. for mobile land forces, air defense, long-range weapons systems, and the biggest security shield of all—the nuclear “umbrella” over the continent. “[NATO] doesn’t work without the nuclear umbrella and all the strategic leadership and strategic force capabilities that the U.S. brings,” says General Gordon B. Davis Jr. (ret.), a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis and former top NATO official.

The position of Secretary-General is mainly a diplomatic one, with no direct military authority. But Rutte, a workaholic bachelor with no photos of loved ones in his office, seems to be marshaling member states to meet the moment. His most immediate task is ensuring allies rally around the spending push during the June 24–25 NATO summit in his hometown of the Hague, and in that he is optimistic. “I’m really pretty confident that it will be a splash,” Rutte says. “I see Europeans stepping up.”

And after that? In its first half century, NATO preserved democracy in postwar Europe, helped defeat the Soviet Union, and served as a synonym for “the West.” Once Rutte finishes sorting out the books, there awaits the challenge of making sure the alliance remains united and durable for the years to come.

Rutte has trained his eyes on the spending target ever since Trump first floated it in January. He is keeping up the push in the weeks before the summit. Two days after his TIME interview, Rutte strolls up to a black Mercedes, arm extended, to greet Czech President Petr Pavel as he steps out of the vehicle, brown leather bag in hand. “Welcome back,” Rutte smiles, guiding the stoic Pavel, a retired army general and former chairman of the NATO Military Committee, toward the headquarters building. The two men sit down for a closed-door meeting, and afterward, Pavel is direct about his nation’s spending commitment. “If the discussion in the Hague leads us to a general agreement that we need to spend up to 5%, Czech Republic is ready to support it,” he says at the closing press conference.

Others are less forthcoming. A couple of hours after Pavel’s positive comments, Rutte greets a beaming Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof elsewhere in the building with a hug and launches into talks. At the press conference that caps his visit, Schoof is evasive when asked if the Dutch will agree to the 5% goal. “We will discuss intensively in the Cabinet and the parliament probably as

well on what we are going to do." The Netherlands agreed to the target on June 13.

Getting Europe to pay up may be the most important step in preventing the transactional Trump from undermining the alliance, but managing him requires its own skills. Rutte has repeatedly said that the Trump Administration is "absolutely right" in making more demands of the alliance, and that tone has played well in Washington.

"It's great to be with a friend of mine," Trump said at their last meeting in the Oval Office in March. "Every report I've gotten is 'What a great job he did,' and I'm not at all surprised." Rutte's approach also seems to be yielding tangible results. Trump had reportedly threatened to skip the NATO summit, but the White House confirmed on June 3 that he will attend.

The spending push is not just about addressing Trump's complaints that the allies aren't paying their fair share for defense. "This is about practical stuff," Rutte says. "We know that on the Canadian and European side we lack air-defense systems, we lack long-range missiles, we lack logistics systems, maneuverable land formations."

Increased European capability would free America up to focus more on China. “The [U.S.] defense budget is continually under pressure. We have real readiness issues after many years of deployment,” says Rachel Ellehuus, a former adviser to the U.S. NATO mission. “The U.S. is facing its own pressures and really needs allies to step up.”

No matter how quickly they do, few think America’s NATO allies could stand up to a direct Russian threat without the U.S. Which means all of Rutte’s efforts on the budget and capabilities fronts would be for naught if Trump simply decided not to come to the defense of alliance members, should the worst come to pass.

There’s reason to worry it might. Russian sabotage against U.S. and European targets tripled from 2023 to 2024, according to a Center for Strategic and International Studies report. The head of Germany’s intelligence has even warned that sabotage could trigger Article 5, NATO’s mutual-defense clause. So could a Russian attempt to seize land in former Soviet republics where Russian-speaking minorities are numerous.

All of which adds urgency to the cheery Netherlander holding the reins.

War and tragedy have loomed over Rutte’s life. His father Izaak, a trader who spent much of his life in Indonesia, then a Dutch colony, survived the Tjideng Japanese labor camp. His wife Petronella did not, and Izaak married her sister Mieke. They would live in the country until the 1950s.

Rutte was born in the Hague in 1967, the youngest of seven children from his father’s two marriages; some siblings are decades older. One brother died from AIDS in the 1980s, an event he once said “drastically” changed his worldview. “I realized that I will only live once. There is no dress rehearsal, there is only one

performance," Rutte said. "That is where my enormous drive comes from."

Rutte showed an early interest in politics. He joined the youth branch of the center-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) at 16. Although his ambition was to be a concert pianist, he chose to pursue a degree in Dutch history at Leiden University instead. Rutte calls the piano his "great hobby" but is careful not to play past 9 p.m. because of neighbors living on six sides. "Then you get calls, 'Our children are trying to sleep. And by the way, it was not as good as you thought,'" he laughs.

Rutte rose up the VVD's ranks, becoming national chairman of its youth branch while a student at Leiden. He graduated in 1992 and held a series of human-resources jobs at Unilever before taking office as a member of parliament in 2003. Rutte won the VVD leadership position in 2006, and in the 2010 elections led the party to become the largest in parliament for the first time ever.

Soon after, he became Prime Minister, proving himself to be a master coalition builder. Rutte's first government was a coalition with the more right-leaning Christian Democrats (CDA) but was propped up by the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV), led by the anti-Muslim firebrand Geert Wilders. His second, third, and final Cabinets included a mix of social democrats, centrists, and conservatives. He is "a very capable politician who is able to bring people together even when they have very different views," says Simon Otjes, a senior assistant professor at Leiden University.

Rutte has also been dogged by scandal. His third Cabinet resigned in January 2021 following a parliamentary report that found that as many as 10,000 families were forced to repay thousands of euros after they had been wrongly accused of welfare fraud. Another parliamentary report in February 2023 found the Dutch government had for years ignored the risks of drilling gas in Groningen, which had caused man-made earthquakes that damaged homes and

affected thousands of lives. Rutte apologized for both scandals. Throughout various controversies, Rutte had a habit of stating he had “no active memory” of thornier details. “He had a more flexible relationship with the truth,” Otjes says.

The end came in July 2023 when he resigned over a migration fight. But even as his political career waned, the next February he secured a critical endorsement from the U.S. for the top NATO job. The Biden Administration considered other candidates, including the more hawkish Kaja Kallas, then Prime Minister of Estonia. But “President Biden had liked him,” recalls Sean Savett, the former White House National Security Council spokesperson, and Biden and his advisers concluded that Kallas was “less likely to be able to win over support from some of the Western European allies.”

Those who know Rutte well expected the job would be a big lifestyle shift for him. He had spent years going to the same hairdresser, visiting the same cafés, and eating the same meals at the same restaurants in the Hague. “He sometimes drives his closest friends crazy, because of all these habits,” says Sierk Nawijn, a special adviser to NATO who has worked with Rutte for a decade.

Rutte has also kept the same modest apartment in the Hague that he bought with his best friend in his youth. He later shared it with that friend's mother for 20 years until she passed away in 2012 while Rutte was Prime Minister. Rutte still gets back to the Hague whenever work permits—perhaps in part because of the routines that help keep him grounded. Those include teaching a high school social-studies class on Fridays at the Johan de Witt group of schools. "I love doing it," Rutte says. "It gives you so much energy."

The downing of MH17 over Ukraine's Donbas region, by Russian-backed forces in July 2014, may have provided the most formative experience to the future NATO Secretary-General. The attack claimed 298 lives, 196 of them Dutch. Rutte says that "all illusions" he may have had about Vladimir Putin were "gone" after it took six nights of calls for the Russian President to agree to help families retrieve the remains of loved ones. "And then after that he never, ever, ever was able to accept that the Russians probably made a mistake," a still visibly shaken Rutte says. "It has to do with basic decency."

The tragedy of Ukraine has stayed with Rutte ever since. He became one of the most frequent wartime visitors to the country and made his first trip as Secretary-General there on Oct. 3, just two days after taking up the NATO post, meeting Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv. In April he visited Odesa, a city the Ukrainian President has avoided taking world leaders to since last March when a Russian ballistic missile struck within hundreds of meters of Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. When asked why he was willing to take the risk of traveling there, he says it was "just to make the point that it is not only Kyiv which is under threat."

Rutte now helps coordinate outside security assistance to Ukraine, a new responsibility given to NATO by the Biden Administration in an attempt to Trump-proof aid. European and Canadian NATO

allies have so far this year given more than the estimated $20 billion the U.S. provided in 2024. A German military officer involved in providing support to Ukraine told Reuters that, if necessary, Europe can sustain Ukrainian resistance alone.

But the war in Ukraine has also underscored the limits of Rutte's power. Almost a year ago, NATO members agreed to an "irreversible path" for Ukraine to join the alliance. Rutte finds himself in the middle. On the one hand, he says the deal with Kyiv is "still standing," but he adds, to the disappointment of Ukrainian officials, that it "doesn't mean that membership is part of a peace deal."

That's another delicate issue. Rutte has publicly backed the peace talks that grew out of Trump's view of himself as a dealmaker, and have at times raised alarm among others in NATO. The "Trump Administration's approach has been to put pressure on the victim, Ukraine, rather than on the aggressor, Russia," the U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Bridget Brink said in April before resigning. Rutte says that the U.S. President is "doing exactly what he needs to do. I really commend him for that. Because he broke the deadlock and is constantly engaging with Ukraine and Russia."

Rutte brushed off current concerns that Trump is abandoning his cease-fire efforts at the press conference with Schoof. An agreement must ensure that Putin never again tries to “capture one square kilometer, square mile of Ukraine. That is crucial.” But the conflict has only escalated, with Russia’s launching some of its most extensive strikes in a war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of casualties, and Ukraine’s carrying out the audacious Operation Spiderweb drone attack, which damaged or destroyed strategic aircraft inside Russia. The prospect of a cease-fire looks more elusive than ever.

NATO, of course, was created to deter an attack by Russia, when it was doing business as the Soviet Union. And the U.S. was a key architect of the alliance, and the world order Trump is intent on dismantling. So there are easier jobs than the one Rutte holds. And even critics give Rutte high marks for handling Trump and rallying European allies to boost spending and military readiness. The abbreviated NATO summit—reportedly scaled back to keep Trump happy—should be a point of celebration for both men, assuming the funding boost is agreed to as hoped. But the next challenge will be executing those plans. “He’s got big, big work to do,” General Davis says, and “there are surprises to come.”

It helps that he’s upbeat. Back at Rutte’s office, as our interview begins to wind down, the Secretary-General repeats a familiar line about the alliance’s ability to outpace Moscow—if it chooses to. “The Russian economy is only 5% of the NATO economy. They are $2 trillion. NATO is $50 trillion. And they produce four times as much ammunition as the whole of NATO.”

Three-quarters of a century after its founding, Rutte is confident that NATO can fend off any threat from Moscow. “I am pretty much convinced that we are safe for now,” he says. But Russia is reconstituting its armed forces, and Rutte warns of the risk of being complacent. “If we do not invest much more, plus get the defense

industrial production going," he says, "the Russians might try something."

Optimism, after all, will get you only so far.

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https://time.com/7295448

She Says Social-Media Algorithms Led to Her Eating Disorder. Now She’s Suing TikTok and Instagram

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

The Brief June 18, 2025

Updates on the Israel and Iran conflict, a case that could upend social media, and more

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Podcast ID – Long Length: `51001c1f-ad86-4ceb-b10b-d17b768f72d6`

As a freshman in high school, Caroline Koziol competed in the Connecticut statewide championship, swimming the 100-yd. butterfly in just over a minute. By senior year, she could barely climb the stairs without seeing black spots. In September 2021, Koziol's coach had to pull her out of the pool after she nearly passed out during swim practice.

"My coach was like, 'Just eat a granola bar. You'll feel better,'" says Koziol, now a college junior. "And I was like, 'That's absolutely not going to happen.'"

Back then, Koziol was deep in the grips of an eating disorder that shattered her adolescence. Now, she's suing the social media giants Meta and TikTok, alleging that the design of their products contributed to her anorexia and made it more difficult for her to recover.

When Koziol was stuck at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, she started looking up at-home workouts on social media to keep herself in shape for swimming, and searched for healthy recipes to make with her mom. Within weeks, her Instagram and TikTok feeds were full of content promoting extreme workouts and disordered eating. "One innocent search turned into this avalanche," she says, sipping iced coffee at a shop near her parents'

home in Hartford. “It just began to overtake every thought that I had.”

Koziol, now 21, is among more than 1,800 plaintiffs suing the companies behind several leading social media platforms as part of a case that could reshape their role in American society. The plaintiffs include young adults recovering from mental-health problems, the parents of suicide victims, school districts dealing with phone addiction, local governments, and 29 state attorneys general. They’ve joined together as part of a multidistrict litigation (MDL), a type of lawsuit which consolidates similar complaints around the country into one case to streamline pretrial proceedings, which is now moving through federal court in the Northern District of California.

The plaintiffs allege that the products created by social media giants are “addictive and dangerous,” that the defendants have “relentlessly pursued a strategy of growth at all costs, recklessly ignoring the impact of their products on children’s mental and physical health,” and that young people like Caroline Koziol are the “direct victims of intentional product design choices made by each defendant.”

The MDL is expected to reach trial next spring. It comes as social media is monopolizing more and more attention from children and teens. The average teenager in the U.S. spends nearly five hours per day on social media, according to a 2023 Gallup poll; those who spend more than three hours on it daily have double the risk of depression and anxiety. One study found that clinical depression among young people was up 60% from 2017 to 2021, which critics attribute partly to rising social media use. Overall, 41% of teens with high social media use rate their mental health as poor or very poor, according to the American Psychological Association. “Social media is associated with significant mental health harms for adolescents,” wrote former surgeon general Vivek Murthy, who

argues for putting warning labels on social media platforms as the U.S. does with tobacco.

As some of the most powerful companies in the world work to monetize their attention, kids across the country are struggling with the consequences of social media addiction. “They’re being stalked by these companies, stalked by these really disturbed values and beauty ideas, stalked by the phone in their hand,” says Dr. S. Bryn Austin, a professor of behavioral science at the Harvard School of Public Health. “The algorithm is finding them no matter what they’re doing.” To critics, there’s little question why: Austin co-published research which estimated that in 2022 alone, children under 17 delivered nearly $11 billion in advertising revenue to Facebook, Instagram, Snap, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube.

Legislative efforts to regulate social media companies have mostly stalled in Congress, and the plaintiffs’ attorneys in the social media MDL say this case represents the best hope of holding these tech companies accountable in court—and getting justice for those who have been harmed. The MDL, says co-lead plaintiffs’ lawyer Previn Warren of Motley Rice, is a “giant coordinated siege by families and AGs unlike anything we’ve seen since the opioid crisis.”

The plaintiffs argue the companies were aware of the ramifications for young users, yet designed their products to maximize addictiveness anyway. Internal documents obtained by the *Wall Street Journal* in 2021 suggest that Facebook, now Meta, knew that Instagram was harming girls’ mental health: “We make body image issues worse for 1 in 3 teen girls,” said one slide presenting internal research. (Meta disputes this characterization, saying the same internal research shows teen girls were more likely to say Instagram made them feel better than worse.)

“These companies knew that there was a disproportionate effect on young women,” says Koziol’s lawyer, Jessica Carroll of Motley Rice. She represents eating disorder clients as young as 13 years

old, including some who have been on social media since they were 10. “I think that they experimented on a generation of young people, and we are seeing the effect of that today.”

Suing social media companies is a difficult challenge. Most digital speech is protected by the First Amendment, and social media platforms have long asserted protections under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which grants them immunity from liability for content they host. But the plaintiffs in the MDL aren’t suing over content. They’re suing on product liability and negligence grounds, alleging that defective design features hook children to the platforms and allow them to evade parental consent, while the recommendation algorithms manipulate kids to keep them on the apps. Koziol isn’t suing Instagram’s and TikTok’s parent companies for hosting content that drove her to an eating disorder. She’s alleging that the platforms are designed to maximize her engagement, and as a result, she was drawn deeper and deeper into anorexia content.

“If I saw one or two videos, it wouldn’t have made a difference,” Koziol says. “But when it was all that I was seeing, that’s when it became obsessive.”

Critics say that bombardment is a deliberate feature, not a bug. “They have a machine-learning recommendation system that is oriented towards growth at all costs,” says Carroll, “Which means anything to keep eyeballs on it.”

Meta, which owns Instagram, says it has sought to combat the harms experienced by underage users by rolling out new restrictions. As of last year, any Instagram user from the ages of 13 to 18 will default to what Meta calls a teen account, which is automatically private, limits sensitive content, turns off notifications at night, and doesn’t allow messaging with anyone without mutual contacts. The teen accounts are meant to address key concerns that parents have about teens on the app, which Meta spokeswoman Liza Crenshaw described as “content, contact, and time.” Meta has also developed “classifiers,” she said—AI programs that scan for problematic content to remove.

“We know parents are worried about having unsafe or inappropriate experiences online, and that’s why we’ve significantly changed the Instagram experience for tens of millions of teens with new teen accounts,” Crenshaw said in a statement to TIME. “These accounts provide teens with built-in protections to automatically limit who’s contacting them and the content they’re seeing, and teens under 16 need a parent’s permission to change those settings. We also give parents oversight over the teens’ use of Instagram, with ways to see who their teens are chatting with and block them from using the app for more than 15 minutes a day, or for certain periods of time, like during school or at night.”

“TikTok proactively restricts unhealthy weight loss content and provides access to supportive resources and experts right in our app to anyone in need,” a company spokesperson said in a statement to TIME. “We’re mindful that content that can be triggering is unique to each individual, which is why we empower people with a range of tools to shape their experience, including tools to manage topics and block keywords, hashtags, and creators in their For You feed.”

Caroline Koziol's parents thought she was too young for social media as a preteen. But many of her friends in elementary school already had accounts on Instagram and TikTok, and Koziol felt left out. Both platforms have an age limit of 13. Koziol says she signed up when she was 10 or 11. "I was able to lie about my age really easily and make an account," she recalls. "My parents had no idea."

Age verification is an "industry-wide challenge," says Crenshaw, adding that this year Meta started testing a new AI tool designed to proactively find accounts of teens masquerading as adults and transition them to teen accounts. Meta supports federal legislation that requires app stores to get parental approval whenever a teen under 16 downloads an app.

As a competitive swimmer, Koziol had spent much of her life in a bathing suit, and was comfortable in her body. "I never thought twice about other people's bodies or my own," she says. What she cared about was her athletic career. Her dream was to swim competitively in college. Then she began spending time on Instagram and TikTok. "I started using social media, and I'm like, 'Oh, I have really broad shoulders compared to a lot of girls,'" she recalls. "Or, 'Oh, my thighs touch,' whereas the fitness influencers, their thighs don't."

When the pandemic hit, her school went remote and swim practice was canceled. Koziol knew that even a few days away from the pool could weaken her endurance and make her less competitive. Worried about losing muscle mass, she searched on Instagram for "30 minute at-home workout," or "cardio workout at home." She was also filling free time by baking with her mom, and started looking up healthy recipes to make. "My searches were never 'low calorie, low fat,'" Koziol says. "It was 'healthy.'"

The dramatic evolution of the content the algorithm served to her was apparent only in retrospect. “It was so nefarious,” she says. Searching for healthy recipes led her to low-calorie recipes. Searching for at-home workouts led her to videos of skinny influencers in workout clothes, “body checking” for the camera. “Something in my algorithm just switched,” she says. “There was nothing I could do.” A healthy teenager who wanted to see memes and funny videos and exchange messages with her friends suddenly had her feed filled with “very thin girls in workout clothing, showing off their bodies.”

Before too long, her daily diet shrank to just a protein bar or two. Sometimes she ate nothing at all until dinner. For months she subsisted mostly on baby puffs and Diet Coke—“Just to fill my stomach”—even as she forced herself to do hours of cardio. Meanwhile, the algorithms supplied images of skinnier and skinnier girls, on more and more extreme diets. Other users chimed in with comments on those posts, Koziol says, suggesting tips and tricks to “feel like you’re eating something.” She kept her car stocked with paper towels, wipes, and extra mascara so that she could reapply makeup after forcing herself to vomit on the side of the road.

By her junior year, “I was addicted to this empty feeling,” Koziol says. Being on social media was like “getting sucked into a dark hole.” She lost 30 lb. in a year. Her eating disorders led to issues with her throat and teeth, and hormonal problems that caused hot flashes and night sweats; her brain felt fuzzy as her short-term memory faltered from malnutrition. “I was like a zombie,” she says. “I was not the same person.”

Her parents realized something was wrong, and Koziol started outpatient treatment for anorexia the summer after junior year. She met with psychiatrists, dieticians, and therapists. Nothing could break the algorithm’s grip. “When my thoughts correlated with

what I was seeing on my phone, it just felt normal," she says. "I really didn't even see a problem with it."

Senior year she missed half her classes to attend treatment. She wasn't able to take the AP course load she'd hoped, and only graduated because of all the extra credits she'd taken earlier in high school. Instead of going to college, she went to Monte Nido, an inpatient anorexia-treatment facility in Irvington, N.Y.

Dr. Molly Perlman, the facility's chief medical officer, says that while many eating disorders have an underlying genetic component, they're triggered by social environments—and photo-based social media platforms are a perfect trigger. Perlman says that not only have those apps contributed to the rise of eating disorders, they've also made them far more difficult to treat. "The algorithms are very smart, and they know their users, and they know what they will click on," Perlman says. "These are malnourished, vulnerable brains that are working towards finding recovery, and yet the algorithms are capitalizing on their disease."

Toward the end of Koziol's six-week stay at Monte Nido in the summer of 2022, her therapy group had a "phone cleansing day." All the patients were asked to either delete social media altogether or to block harmful hashtags. The facility was filled with women of different ages, races, backgrounds, and hometowns. But when everyone opened their phones, Koziol noticed that their Instagram feeds looked just like hers. "We had the same creators," she says. "The same posts, the exact same content."

For all their differences, these women were being fed the exact same pro-anorexia content. "It showed me that this algorithm doesn't care about who you are," Koziol says. "All they need is that first little search."

Gabby Cusato's story started out a lot like Koziol's. Gabby was a competitive athlete too, a cross-country runner. She was part of a tight-knit family from upstate New York—a quadruplet, with two older siblings and loving parents.

Gabby's parents got her a phone in seventh grade to help the family coordinate pickups from multiple different sports practices. She had one Instagram account her parents knew about and several others that were secret. "Imagine being 15. You want to be fast, you want to be skinny," says Gabby's mother Karen. "And if somebody's saying to you, here's how you can do it, here's how you can lose more weight—it's just a rabbit hole."

After her drastic weight change, Karen Cusato enrolled Gabby in intensive outpatient treatment for anorexia. She went three days a week for four hours a day. But as soon as she got out of therapy, she would be back on her phone. One of her Instagram accounts was devoted to her eating-disorder treatment; Gabby posted pictures of healthy meals she ate during her recovery. Jessica Carroll, who also represents the Cusato family, says this account may have aggravated Gabby's problem. "By creating this account," Carroll says, "she's almost inviting the algorithm to send her more of this stuff."

One day in November 2019, Karen Cusato confiscated Gabby's phone after an argument and sent her to her room, thinking that her daughter could cool off and they could patch things up in the morning. The next morning, Gabby's bed was made, but she was nowhere to be found. At first, Cusato and her husband thought she had run away. "Then we found her in the closet," Cusato recalls. "The scream from my husband is something that I can never unhear." Gabby had died by suicide. She was 15.

Most days, Cusato blames herself. But she knows this would not have happened if Gabby had not become so addicted to social media. "If she was born 20 years earlier, this would not have taken place," she says. If Cusato could do it again, she'd buy her daughter a phone without internet access. "Never in my wildest dreams did I think this was what the phone could turn into."

"I think she felt less than perfect," Cusato says. "The algorithms were giving an ideal weight for an ideal height, and she was chasing that number, and, you know, she didn't get to that number that she thought was going to make her happy." Anorexia has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder, not just because of the malnutrition involved, but because it's often clustered with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Carroll says that nearly half of the personal-injury cases represented by her firm in the MDL are related to eating disorders.

Cusato has been a high school math teacher for more than two decades. Every day she stands in front of classes of kids who are the same age Gabby was when she died. During the years she's spent in the classroom, she's noticed a change take place in her students. "Were kids depressed before? Yes," she says. "Were they depressed in the numbers they are now? Absolutely not."

The suits filed by Koziol, the Cusatos, and others represent a new phase in the effort to combat social media harms. "The strategy of

these companies is to do anything they can to distort the language of Section 230 to protect them with impunity," says Mary Graw, a law professor at the Catholic University of America who has written extensively about Section 230. "As a result we have an unregulated industry which is used by most of the globe with the potential to cause massive harm, and no way to look under the hood to see what the industry is doing. It is stunning. No other industry has such avoidance of accountability."

The social media MDL cleared a major obstacle in November 2023 when a federal judge in California ruled that many of the lawsuits could proceed. While Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers narrowed the scope of the litigation, she ruled that many of the negligence and product liability claims are not barred by either the First Amendment or Section 230.

Multidistrict litigation is often slow and unwieldy, since it contains many distinct cases with different plaintiffs seeking different damages. The school districts, for example, want something different than the attorneys general do. Personal-injury plaintiffs like Koziol and the Cusatos are seeking compensation for medical bills, pain and suffering, and punitive damages for what they say was "reckless, malicious conduct" by the social media companies. They also want injunctive relief—a formal ruling from the judge stating that the platforms are defectively designed, and court orders requiring the companies to remove addictive or dangerous features, add warnings, and strengthen safeguards. The fact-discovery phase of the case, in which both parties exchange documents and testimony, closed in April. The two sides are preparing for a motion of summary judgment in the fall, when the judge will decide if the case will go to trial.

Koziol can't point to any one piece of content that caused her eating disorder. To her, "it's the constant bombardment of all of these videos" that led her to the brink of starvation. "No third party is responsible for the algorithm," she says. "That's Meta and

TikTok alone." While she's seeking financial compensation for her eating-disorder treatment as well as other financial damages, Koziol says the purpose of the suit is to hold those corporations accountable. "They knew what they did was wrong," she says. "What they were doing was harming young girls. And it ruined my life."

Koziol had been accepted to her dream school, the University of South Carolina. She had imagined joining a sorority and going to SEC football games on Saturdays. She even had a roommate lined up before she decided to take a year off to focus on her recovery. By the time she was ready for college, her therapists warned her that going so far away could trigger a relapse. Instead she enrolled at University of Hartford, closer to home. Greek life and football aren't in the cards right now. She's not on the same track as most of her old friends. She had to quit swimming.

Even after everything she's been through, Koziol can't bring herself to delete her social media entirely; Instagram is so ubiquitous that it feels impossible to be a young person without it. She's blocked certain hashtags from her Instagram, reset her account, and unfollowed harmful creators. Still, the algorithm finds ways to tempt her.

"It's taken a lot of work to not interact with the disordered content that occasionally comes up," she says. "I always have to remind myself: the second I click on it, I'm gonna get another post tomorrow, and then another post tomorrow, and then another post tomorrow."

If you or someone you know needs help, call the National Alliance for Eating Disorders hotline at 866-662-1235, or the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988.

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https://time.com/7295323

Why the 28 Years Later Franchise Has Always Been About More Than Zombies

McCluskey is a staff writer at TIME. She covers culture, focusing on horror, fantasy, and science fiction.

In *28 Years Later*, the zombies are evolving. Scratch that—the *infected* are evolving. It may seem like an insignificant distinction, but the word choice has long meant something to director Danny Boyle, who has returned to helm the highly-anticipated third film in the post-apocalyptic horror franchise, nearly a quarter century after unleashing his innovative outbreak thriller *28 Days Later*.

“We had this thing about, ‘No, they’re not zombies. They’re infected,’” he says. “We wanted them to behave in a different way physically, but they also weren’t undead. They could die and they will die, but so will you if they catch you.”

Proper terminology notwithstanding, *28 Days Later* became a big old zombie success story anyway. After hitting theaters in the U.K. in November 2002 then making its way across the pond the following June, Boyle’s culture-shifting collaboration with

screenwriter Alex Garland caught on like a contagion, earning more than $80 million worldwide against a reported budget of $8 million. Boyle's second movie based on a Garland novel or screenplay—following 2000's *The Beach*—*28 Days* follows Cillian Murphy's bike courier Jim, who wakes up from a coma in an abandoned London hospital to find the so-called Rage Virus has devastated the U.K. The result of human experimentation on chimps gone wrong, it has left hordes of shockingly fast, uncontrollably aggressive, and rabidly bloodthirsty infected in its wake.

Now, over two decades later, *28 Years Later* breathes new life into the franchise's infection allegory in a world that is still recovering from a years-long global pandemic. The original film may have been a smash in part due to its propulsive new take on a genre, but its appeal was never just its thrills and chills. The story remains a cautionary political tale about the ways in which people, when failed by institutions, resort to violence against one another.

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28 Days Later reinvigorated zombies for the modern era by reimagining how the undead, or infected, were allowed to move. Gone were the slow, shambling monsters that George A. Romero's 1968 classic *The Night of the Living Dead* had established as the zombie status quo. Here instead were a new brand of barbaric

creatures that could take chase at a terrifyingly relentless clip. “It made a lot of sense that they would be much scarier if they could move at enormous speed,” Boyle says. “But, at the time, that was quite a radical change.”

Boyle shot *28 Days*’ deserted London scenes in July 2001, just a little over a month before 9/11, and says the circumstances surrounding its release changed the nature of the movie entirely. “It was the first film that came out after that was really about citywide terror and the idea that these cities, which seem so incredibly permanent and magnificent and omnipotent, could be changed just like that,” he says. “They could be robbed of the reason they have to be there, which is the people. Cities without people in them make no sense. So that’s part of the reason we resisted the word ‘zombie,’ because it allowed us to create our own identity.”

What followed was a decade-plus boom of, sorry, zombie-related media that capitalized on the public’s renewed interest in the horror subgenre. This period saw the release of horror hits like 2004’s *Dawn of the Dead*, 2007’s *28 Weeks Later* (a sequel directed by Juan Carlos Fresnadillo on which Boyle and Garland served as executive producers), and 2013’s *World War Z*. It also gave rise to beloved parody films like 2004’s *Shaun of the Dead* and 2009’s *Zombieland*. And it led to the trend successfully spreading to other mediums, as evidenced by 11 seasons of *The Walking Dead* TV series and video games like *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and *The Last of Us* (which also went the infected route).

With *28 Years Later*, in theaters June 20, Boyle returns to the scene of the outbreak nearly three decades after the Rage Virus first ravaged society. The new movie follows 12-year-old Spike (Alfie Williams) as he leaves the safety of the secluded Holy Island community—a section of land connected to the U.K. mainland solely by a tidal causeway—to explore what lies beyond the only home he’s ever known. Aaron Taylor-Johnson and Jodie Comer star as Spike’s parents, Jamie and Isla, while Ralph Fiennes plays Dr.

Kelson, a mysterious survivor Spike encounters on his travels. Early on in the film, which was also written by Garland, we learn the infection was ultimately contained to the U.K., after it was quarantined and left to its own devices as the rest of the world moved on.

“We wanted to do something that forced us to look at our own land rather than having the virus become an international contagion, as was hinted at by *28 Weeks Later*,” Boyle says. “So we said, let’s just make it based in the U.K. and, like in the first film, all the characters are British and they’ve all got to solve these problems themselves. There’s no external force that’s going to come in and save them.”

This narrative was partially inspired by Brexit, the U.K.’s 2020 withdrawal from the European Union, which Boyle refers to as the country “looking backwards.” But the film’s focus on the ways in which civilization would rebuild itself after an apocalyptic event was also greatly informed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“When COVID first happened, we wore gloves, we disinfected groceries,” he says. “But gradually over time, you start taking more risks. You don’t stay in that super alert stage. You evolve. And so it is in *28 Years*. They begin to take risks. Jamie takes his 12-year-old son to the mainland even though, as the mom says, that’s f-cking crazy.”

The specter of COVID-19 also played a role in how the film depicts its characters paying tribute to those who were lost to the Rage Virus, particularly in a stunning physical monument best left to discover while watching the movie. “That act of dignity humanizes us,” Boyle says. “They’re dead. They’re gone. But you remember them and you honor them.”

Isla’s concerns about Spike venturing away from home are justified. The infected are still everywhere, surviving after the virus acted like a steroid on certain individuals, resulting in a larger and stronger breed known as Alphas. “The virus is alive, so it will mutate,” Boyle says. “Because it expends so much energy in people, it has found hosts who have learned to hunt in order to feed that energy. And when you hunt, you organize. So they’ve begun to hunt in packs with Alphas as their leaders.”

Those types of primal instincts build on the infected archetype Garland and Boyle created: A far cry from mindless zombies limping along in search of brains, they’re an altogether more terrifying threat to Spike and the rest of his community.

28 Years Later may appear to be arriving on the tail end of the zombie fad. But the appetite for this particular property seems undiminished. In December, the official *28 Years* trailer earned the second most views in the first 24 hours after its release of any horror movie trailer ever, behind only the trailer for 2019’s *It Chapter Two*. Following record ticket presales, it’s also tracking for a franchise-best opening weekend of $34 million at the domestic box office.

Its appeal is bolstered by the fact that, in the 23 years since *28 Days Later*, Boyle hasn't made anything remotely resembling a zombie movie. In the wake of 2004's *Millions*, his dramedy follow-up to *28 Days*, Boyle went on to direct such major award contenders as 2008's *Slumdog Millionaire* (which took home the Oscar for Best Picture), 2010's *127 Hours*, and 2015's *Steve Jobs*. To some, it may seem like there's no thematic throughline to Boyle's body of work. But the filmmaker says he was once persuasively informed otherwise.

"I was absolutely convinced that every film I made was completely different," he says. "Then I met this French journalist who told me, 'All your films are exactly the same. You have a protagonist, they're almost always male, and they face insurmountable odds before overcoming them.' And that's true."

This time, the journey to overcome those odds will take three movies, beginning with *28 Years Later*. After waiting so long to deliver a follow-up to their original offering, Boyle and Garland decided the rest of the story deserved to be told over the course of a trilogy. "This idea came up of three films that are complete and satisfying in their own right, but are linked," Boyle says. "There's a character arc that runs throughout."

While Garland is writing all three scripts, Nia DaCosta (*Candyman*, *The Marvels*) was tapped to direct the second installment, *28 Years Later: The Bone Temple*, a decision Boyle says was intended to "break up the boys club." *The Bone Temple* was filmed back-to-back with its predecessor and is slated to hit theaters in January 2026. Boyle will then return to the director's seat for the third film, which he hints will be "a bigger story about redemption" centered on Murphy's Jim, bringing the series full circle.

Three movies into this saga, with two still to come, does Boyle ultimately care how people classify his horror magnum opus? "You

can call it whatever you like," he says. "I just hope you enjoy it, and you feel it deserves to be there."

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https://time.com/7294568

The Gilded Age Is Just Too British to Love the American Dream

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

In the third season of HBO's *The Gilded Age*, a frothy costume drama set amid the robber barons and socialites of 1880s New York, a servant suddenly comes into money. So much of it, in fact, that he'll never have to work again. But instead of seizing his new-found freedom, the man keeps his windfall a secret and continues toiling below stairs. He simply can't imagine leaving a household staff that has become his surrogate family.

Even for a show that's famous for its silliness, this is a ridiculous storyline. No one in their right mind would choose a 19th century servant's labors as a hobby. It isn't surprising, though, to see *The Gilded Age* telegraph such complacency among the lower classes or alarm at the prospect of sudden social mobility. Created by

Downton Abbey mastermind Julian Fellowes, a bona fide aristocrat and Conservative politician in his home country of Britain, the series aspires to be more than what it is: a historical soap *par excellence* decked out in prestige drag. Successful or not, it's a reflection on the American Dream of equal opportunity as pursued by the self-made strivers of its era. Season 3, in particular, suggests that Fellowes does not wholly approve.

This is the season where things start to get real for the show's quintessential dreamers: George (Morgan Spector) and Bertha Russell (Carrie Coon). Born into undistinguished families, this cartoonishly ambitious couple hustled to make George a titan of industry. Season 1 saw them and their nearly grown children, Larry (Harry Richardson) and Gladys (Taissa Farmiga), move into an ostentatious mansion on old-money 61st St. Bertha set about scheming to rule high society the way her husband dominated business. By the second season finale, her triumph in championing the new Metropolitan Opera had cemented the family's arrival. But in the new episodes, Bertha's obsession with marrying off Gladys, against her will, to a British duke (Ben Lamb), divides the Russells. In a parallel overreach—one that could bankrupt him—George insists on trying to build a cross-country railroad during an

economic downturn. Unstable as they are, Fellowes implies, the Russells could fall as quickly as they rose.

Holding steady in more modest, dated luxury across the street are the show's true heroes: quippy society widow Agnes Van Rhijn (Christine Baranski) and her tenderhearted sister Ada Forte (Cynthia Nixon), who'd resigned herself to spinsterhood before meeting a kind reverend (Robert Sean Leonard) in Season 2. Alas, the marriage was short; he died of cancer almost immediately, and the meek— that is, Ada—inherited everything. It was a convenient twist, seeing as Agnes' troubled son, Oscar (Blake Ritson), had just been swindled out of their family's riches. The big drama among the sisters, this season, is Ada's struggle to wrest control of the household from Agnes, now that she's paying the bills. Nothing really changes, though—and in Fellowes' world, tradition and consistency are virtues.

***The Gilded Age* isn't entirely opposed** to progress. Haughty as she can be about the "new people," Agnes, like *Downton*'s imperious Violet Crawley before her, has a good heart. She's open-minded enough to employ a young Black writer, Peggy Scott (Denée Benton), as her secretary. This season, Peggy falls ill at the sisters' home, and they are horrified to see their family doctor refuse to treat her. When Peggy's parents (Audra McDonald and John

Douglas Thompson) arrive with their own physician, Dr. Kirkland (Jordan Donica), Agnes and Ada graciously receive them at the front door. (A romance soon blossoms between doctor and patient, in one of the season's best storylines, bringing McDonald's character into delicious conflict with his snooty mom, played by Phylicia Rashad.) Populated by strong female personalities, the show also gets behind the feminist causes of its time, like women's suffrage. It's sympathetic to the plight of divorced women, then considered too scandalous to be received in polite society.

What Fellowes can't countenance are privileged people who lack the magnanimity befitting their rank and, most of all, servants who are insufficiently grateful to their benevolent employers. If the Russells are presented as morally ambiguous antiheroes, then one of the season's only true villains is a member of their staff who leaks intel on the family to the press. "Money is money," this ostensible monster sniffs when caught. Never does anyone ask if Bertha is adequately compensating her employees, nor do we get to know the culprit well enough to understand the context for the crime. Three seasons in, *The Gilded Age* has barely explored its huge cast of servant characters. Like *Downton*, it has more sympathy for—and curiosity about—aristocrats desperate to keep fortunes they didn't earn than it does for workers whose pursuit of happiness is enshrined in America's founding documents.

Through his characters, Fellowes communicates his approval for a more compassionate and inclusive upper crust. Yet the question of whether class-based gatekeeping and the economic stratification that enables it might be, in themselves, social ills isn't up for debate. (Would Agnes and Ada treat the Scotts with the same respect if they weren't refined members of the Black bourgeoisie?) Rather, the social scene is presumed to be inherently good and worthy of preservation. As Ada observes: "Society's changed, Agnes. The trick is to accommodate the new without upsetting the boat."

https://time.com/7295183

Arson Thriller Smoke Isn’t Nearly as Subversive as It Thinks

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

Smoke gets off to an insufferable start. Freighted with procedural clichés, the Apple TV+ thriller follows a mismatched law-enforcement duo tracking two prolific arsonists. Dave Gudsen (Taron Egerton) is an arson investigator with a standoffish stepson and literary ambitions. His new partner: police detective Michelle Calderone (Jurnee Smollett), an ex-Marine who’s sleeping with a superior. Initial tension gives way to drunken bonding. Pretentious stylistic choices exacerbate the lazy setup. Episodes open with dictionary definitions of thematically appropriate words like *transmogrification* and, for some reason, *fury* on title cards. There are arty shots of billowing infernos. A mournful Thom Yorke song soundtracks the credits. In voiceover, Dave expounds, hackily, on the annihilating power of fire.

After two interminable episodes, a bombshell resets the show, eliminating some of its worst excesses and contextualizing others. *Smoke* becomes watchable. Yet in its swerve away from one egregious set of tropes, it embraces others that are, if less irritating, almost as tired. An emerging critique of aggrieved white machismo comes off, mostly, as a shallow topical hook.

Like so many disappointing Apple TV+ projects, from Nicole Kidman's *Roar* to Billy Crystal's *Before*, the series substitutes marquee names for quality control. Loosely based on the true crime podcast *Firebug*, it was developed by one of Hollywood's favorite authors, Dennis Lehane (*Shutter Island*, *Mystic River*), who was also on the writing staff of *The Wire* and helmed Apple's well-received 2022 miniseries *Black Bird*. The cast includes John Leguizamo, Greg Kinnear, and Anna Chlumsky. Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine, a standout in *The Chi* and *Treme*, brings a fragile authenticity to the tricky but pivotal role of a maladjusted fast-food worker.

But the actors are poorly served by the material. Kinnear is miscast as the detectives' folksy, complacent boss. Leguizamo's character is too broadly sleazy, Chlumsky's too bland. At the story's forefront, Michelle is a dated Strong Female Character with a maudlin history of trauma. Egerton, an executive producer, has taken on a role so

elastic, and so clearly shaped by the need for nine episodes' worth of cliffhangers, it barely holds together.

Populated by unhinged men and masochistic women, and punctuated by fiery, increasingly histrionic set pieces, *Smoke* fails to reconcile its mood of noirish nihilism with its efforts at social commentary. Despite feinting towards subversion, Lehane has produced a typical—overlong, caricature-laden, easy to watch but also to forget—streaming crime show.

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https://time.com/7295106

Sorry, Baby Walks the Delicate Line of Moving Through Trauma With Humor

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.

At their best, movies can be subtle expressions of feelings we've had but can't fully articulate. Besides, when it comes to feelings, articulation might be overrated: one of the functions of art is to explore the undefinable, and sometimes it's a relief to let a movie do some of the emotional heavy lifting for us.

That's the function writer-director-star Eva Victor's debut film *Sorry, Baby* strives to fulfill. Victor plays Agnes, an academic in her late 20s who has stuck around in the sleepy college town where she earned her graduate degree. That choice has seemingly paid off: she's landed a full-time teaching job at her alma mater, following in the footsteps of the charming instructor who'd advised her on her thesis, a guy with a name straight out of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Preston Decker (Louis Cancelmi). Shortly after Agnes starts the job, her closest friend Lydie (Naomi Ackie), an old schoolmate, comes to visit from New York. Lydie has big news of her own: recently married, she has just learned she's pregnant.

Agnes is happy for her, but she also feels abandoned. Lydie is moving on, reshaping her life after grad school in a way Agnes can't.

There's a reason for that: it turns out that Agnes was sexually assaulted in her final year of graduate school. *Sorry, Baby* moves backward and forward in time, recounting the events leading up to the assault as well as its aftermath, during which Agnes struggles with the gray areas of sexual trauma, the jumble of anger, guilt, and recrimination the victim is often left to deal with.

The event isn't dramatized**,** but Agnes' description of it is filled with anguish, not just because it caused her physical and emotional pain, but because she'd liked and trusted the perpetrator—maybe she even thought she might be sexually attracted to him, though in a key moment, she realized she was not. Victor, in both this performance and the shaping of the film, isn't afraid to explore those mixed feelings. Somehow it's expected that all rape victims should feel a certain way: there ought to be unmitigated anger, or a thirst for vengeance. Victor treads into subtler territory here. Agnes doesn't press charges against her rapist, explaining, "I want him to stop being someone who does that. And if he went to jail, he'd just be a person who does that who's also in jail." Agnes doesn't want retribution; she wants the whole thing to have played out differently, to not have been disappointed by a person she trusted.

You could quibble that Agnes' decision not to press charges endangers other women, but that's not the point of *Sorry, Baby.*

And when you see how she's treated, particularly by two faux-feminist campus representatives whose job is ostensibly to help her, her choice is understandable. This is a sort-of comedy about personal trauma, a delicate line to walk—and Victor mostly pulls it off. There's comic relief when you least expect it: What can you do when your cat brings you an almost-dead mouse? There's no good solution to this problem, though Agnes does her best. Victor and her fellow performers navigate the movie's tone shifts admirably. Ackie—terrific in the title role of the 2022 biopic *Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody*—plays Lydie as the kind of friend who can read your deepest secrets, no matter how hard you try to keep them under wraps; she listens with both her ears and eyes. And if Victor at times makes Agnes' awkwardness a little too self-consciously adorable, the actor sparkles, quietly, in scenes with the shy neighbor, Gavin (Lucas Hedges), who comes by at preappointed times for friends-with-benefits sex. Victor shows how Agnes stops just short of letting herself want too much from any one human being. There's no facile way to "get over" or "get past" what happened to her—yet we can see her relearning, step by step, how to move through the world. She has nothing to gain by retreating from it.

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https://time.com/7296755

In My Mom Jayne, Mariska Hargitay Seeks Answers About the Mother She Never Knew

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.

When Mariska Hargitay was 3, she and two of her brothers survived the car accident that killed their mother, bombshell movie star Jayne Mansfield. The kids were asleep in the back seat; the three adults in the front—Mansfield, her companion at the time, and the car's driver—were killed instantly. Mariska's two brothers, injured, were carried away from the scene. It wasn't until later that one of them, 6-year-old Zoltan, realized Mariska wasn't with them: she was pinned beneath the passenger seat, with a head injury. If Zoltan hadn't spoken up, Mariska might not have been found until it was too late.

That's just one of the details revealed in Hargitay's touching documentary *My Mom Jayne*, in which the actor, now 61, summons scraps of facts and remembrances to piece together the truth about her own identity, and in the process make peace with the mother she never knew. Hargitay has known since her 20s that the man who raised her, and loved her deeply—actor and bodybuilder Mickey Hargitay—was not her real father. Only now is she

reckoning with the scope of that truth. *My Mom Jayne* hopscotches through Mansfield's early life and career: She became a mother at age 16, and lived in Texas with her young daughter and her first husband until she could stand it no longer—she wanted to be a movie star so badly that she was drawn to Hollywood, where she eked out a living with small film parts. Then, in 1955, she landed a starring role on Broadway, in *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?* That opened the door to bigger film roles, but like the star she obviously emulated, Marilyn Monroe, Mansfield wanted desperately to be considered a serious actor. With her moonbeam-colored hair and exaggerated, breathy speaking voice—which her children recall as seeming strange and upsetting, so different from the mom they knew at home—she settled, somewhat unhappily, for being a curvaceous sex symbol.

Hargitay, who would build her own career as an actor on TV's *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, never felt comfortable with either her mother's persona or her life choices. Mansfield was only 34 at the time of her death, in 1967. She and Mickey had divorced shortly after Mariska was born, though he and the woman he married after the divorce, Ellen Siano, would end up raising Hargitay and two of her brothers after Mansfield's death. (Hargitay's two other half-siblings also appear in the documentary, helping her cover some gaps that her research couldn't fill.)

Though Hargitay makes it clear that the life her father and stepmother made for the family was a happy one, she also explains how unsettled she had felt for most of her life, unable to comprehend her mother's motivations and feeling resentment about truths that were hidden from her. Yet by the end of *My Mom Jayne* —by which time we've also met Hargitay's biological father, onetime Las Vegas entertainer Nelson Sardelli, in a sequence that's not likely to leave a dry eye in the house—Hargitay's catharsis is complete. When Hargitay finally, and tenderly, tells her mother, "I see myself in you for the first time," we, too, know more about this charming, ambitious performer whose star never burned as brightly

as she’d hoped. She wasn’t *our* mom. But her unruly secrets reflect the uncomfortable truths that are so often hidden in our own histories. Families are made of fallible humans. That’s their tragedy, and their glory.

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https://time.com/7296741

Why Do So Many Serial Killers Come From the Pacific Northwest? A New Book Offers a Theory

For lack of a better term, the 1970s and ’80s are often called America’s “Golden Age” of serial killers throughout the Pacific Northwest. (Its nickname, after all, is “America’s Killing Fields.”) In the decades since, theories about how and why the era produced a disproportionate amount of murderous psychopaths—among them: Ted Bundy, the Hillside Strangler, the Green River Killer, and the I-5 Killer—have included everything from Eisenhower’s 1954 hitchhiker-happy interstate highway system to post-World War II child abuse by traumatized soldiers to sensationalized media coverage of then-new “true crime.”

Any or all of the above may have contributed to the era’s serial killer surge, as could some less obvious explanations like this one: poisonous chemicals, specifically lead, copper and arsenic, that leached into the air from industrial smelters. ASARCO in Tacoma, Wash., for example, regularly released a cloud of lead and arsenic that floated down as a white ash that killed pets and eroded paint off cars. The air was literally the color of lead and the pungent “aroma of Tacoma” lingers to this day. Killers Gary Ridgway, Israel Keyes and Ted Bundy all lived nearby.

So too did Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Caroline Fraser, just 7 years old and mere miles away during Bundy's 1974 summer murder spree. In her new investigative book out June 9, *Murderland: Crime and Bloodlust in the Time of Serial Killers*, she thoroughly explores the so-called "lead-crime hypothesis," a theory that circulated first with academics before entering the mainstream in the early 2010s. Through her unique position of coming of age in Seattle during the era, Fraser's book marks the largest and most in-depth examination of the controversial theory so far. From her home in New Mexico, Fraser explains why she's convinced toxic chemicals helped cause a sudden spike in serial killers, why she got so obsessed with them to begin with and why serial killers really aren't as smart as they think they are.

Read more: *33 True Crime Documentaries That Shaped the Genre*

TIME: Your last book was a biography of *Little House on the Prairie* author Laura Ingalls Wilder. How do you go from that to serial killers?

Fraser: This book has been in my mind for a long time. I was born and raised in Seattle and remember growing up with the presence of Ted Bundy. Even though I wasn't touched by the case directly, just having it happen so close to where I lived was a big deal. Bundy kidnapped and killed two women on the same Sunday afternoon from Lake Sammamish—just six miles from me. After that, people knew that his name was Ted, so there were posters, drawings, and police composites of his face all over the place. It was all anybody could talk about. That summer left me with a pretty strong impression of a chaos and craziness that was happening. And then there were so many others…

…the Zodiac Killer, John Wayne Gacy, Gary Ridgway, Jeffrey Dahmer, Son of Sam, Richard

Ramirez. Did it feel like suddenly serial killers were everywhere?

Certainly by the time of Ramirez [in the mid-’80s], people were thinking, “What the hell is going on here?” It’s striking to me now that nobody was asking why. Nobody was looking at the larger pattern and asking, “Are there more killers than before? Is there something about the Pacific Northwest?” The FBI was presenting themselves as the experts, but they weren’t explaining anything about the phenomenon. Serial killers have always been with us in some fashion, but certainly not in those numbers.

Many theories over the years have sought to explain. How did you arrive at yours?

I figure it’s got to be a combination of things, first of all, and all kinds of things can make a serial killer. Physical and sexual abuse was the leading theory of FBI profilers for a long time. A lot of these guys grew up in very, very poor environments. They often have a missing father, or an abusive father, or they didn’t know who their father was at all—which they blame their mothers for. As we learn more about the brain, we’re thinking more about the effects of concussion and brain damage. Some people think forceps by doctors delivering babies in the ‘50s caused brain damage in infants. Certain vitamin deficiencies when you’re in utero or an infant can produce real deficits in terms of your brain development. All this before chemical exposures.

Read more: *The Best Books of 2025 So Far*

The “lead-crime hypothesis” posits a direct correlation between crime and lead, or as you put

it, “More lead, more murder.” What’s the connection?

During the post-war period, an enormous amount of lead was in the air from mainly two sources: Leaded gas, which everybody used for decades, and heavy industry like smelting. People are still debating the numbers, but it is pretty well accepted now that between 20 and 50% of the sharp rise in crime in the 1980s and ‘90s is attributable to lead. We know lead causes aggression. We know lead damages the brain in developing children. I don’t think anybody thinks lead isn’t at least a factor anymore, as there’s a clear association between the withdrawal of leaded gas in the ‘90s and the drop-off of crime. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, geochemist Clair Patterson proved that lead exposure had caused what he called “a loss of mental acuity.” But the effects of lead are all over the map; besides intelligence, it can affect personality. Many studies connect lead exposure to a particular kind of frontal cortex damage that leads to heightened aggression. This is observed largely in males. The higher the lead exposure, the greater the brain volume mass, and reduced brain volume has been linked to higher levels of psychopathy.

Is there something specific about males from the Pacific Northwest?

While it’s true that there were smelters all over the country, Tacoma is particularly interesting because its smelter sits right in the middle of the city. All the emissions were being spread over not just Tacoma but the entire Pacific Northwest in this plume that was up to a thousand square miles. They measured it all the way up to British Columbia. Crime was up in all of America but it was up in Washington State by almost 30%—three times the national average. That said, and this is one of the reasons I focused on him, a lot of the idea about the Northwest Pacific comes right from

Bundy. He was early in this phenomenon, and he eventually talked a lot, to the point that he was mythologized, almost glamorized. The media described him as “terrific looking” and “Kennedyesque.”

Read more: *Our Fascination With the Serial Killer Next Door*

Serial killers thrive on attention and want their names out there. How do you write about them without buying into the hype? And does hype encourage others?

Serial killers care a lot about their reputations and are known to have obsessions with one another; Israel Keyes, for example, was a big “fan” of Ted Bundy. I’m trying to paint a very different portrait of Bundy than “very attractive genius.” In part by the Hannibal Lecter phenomenon, there’s this idea that serial killers are fiendishly clever, smarter than anybody else. That’s really not true. The truth is, we build these people up in our minds. We have an idea of what they’re like and the power they have. Then when they’re finally unveiled, they’re these sad, pathetic losers. The public should see that. But would any of this make someone take up serial killing in the first place? I don’t think so. These crimes are sexual in nature and something has happened that makes them sexually excited by violence and terrorizing their victims. The prevalence of necrophilia during this period is very weird. It all points to something that has gone wrong with the wiring of the brain.

America’s Serial Killer Database counted 669 serial killers in the 90s, 371 in the 2000s and 117 in the 2010s. Where do you think they’re all going?

A police officer will probably tell you that we're better at catching them now because of increased resources given to police departments. Proponents of mass incarceration will tell you they're in jail earlier and longer. Certainly forensic evidence, specifically DNA, makes identifying serial killers far easier than before, as does technology and video surveillance. But I like to think of it this way: In the same way that we've built cars that are safer to drive, we've also improved health outcomes to build better humans. Pregnant mothers take prenatal vitamins, we raise our children very differently and mental health services have greatly improved. Thanks largely to American football, we better understand the connection between repeated blows to the head and later degradation of cognition and increased aggression. Toxic chemicals including lead were phased out and banned, and then the crime rate took its largest plunge in recorded history. I don't think serial killers are going anywhere as much as we didn't grow them to begin with.

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https://time.com/7291427