

# Your Vote Is Safe.

HOW THE ELECTION WILL BE PROTECTED | BY BARTON GELLMAN



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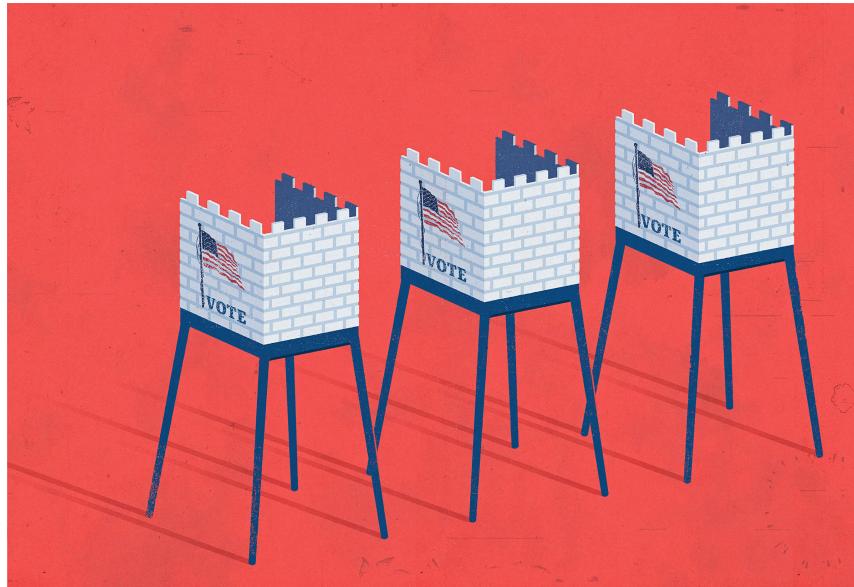
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## Your Vote Is Safe

[Gellman](#), a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist and author, is senior adviser at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.



As Nov. 5 approaches, [former president Donald Trump](#) has left little room for doubt about his intentions. He will almost certainly declare victory on election night, as the votes are still being counted. He may turn out to be right. But if Vice President Kamala Harris wins, Trump will reject the result as corrupt and launch a scorched-earth campaign to overturn it.

This plot is so well telegraphed that it barely counts as a prediction. Trump has stated repeatedly that he cannot lose unless there is “massive fraud”—and, [separately](#), that the election is “rigged,” with a “bad voting system.” As he [told](#) the Fraternal Order of Police on Sept. 6: “We win without voter fraud, we win so easily.” Voters, by that reckoning, can make no other legitimate choice. That upside-down view of elections may still have the power to shock, but after Trump’s response to defeat four years ago it cannot be called surprising.

Perhaps one candidate will win so conclusively that no reasonable person can doubt it. But pollsters continue to assess, as they have for months, that the presidential contest is too close to call, and a narrow win in the current environment is cause for concern. Public opinion surveys show that many Americans are not sure whether to trust the machinery of elections, and many flatly say that they do not. Barely half of those surveyed in a September NORC poll said they were confident of an accurate vote count. That is nothing like a normal number, historically.

We are embarking on a presidential election in which tens of millions of Americans disbelieve the results in advance. [The 2020 election](#), relatedly, was the only one in American history which the loser refused persistently to concede. The partisan split—close to 80% of Democrats, but just 30% of Republicans, have faith in the vote count—reflects the cumulative damage of countless lies.

As the American experiment nears its semiquincentennial, is it capable of holding a secure election with a trusted process and a widely accepted result? If the outcome is not to Trump's liking, can democracy defend itself against another attempt to overthrow a President-elect?

NOV. 11, 2024

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time.com

Questions like these struck some readers as far-fetched when I asked them before the 2020 election in a darkly headlined story for the *Atlantic*: “The Election That Could Break America.” If then President Trump lost his bid for a second term, the story argued, the lead-up to Inauguration Day could bring a no-holds-barred struggle to prevent the transfer of power. Some of my forecasts came true: Fabricated claims of fraud. Attempts to halt the tabulation of votes. Partisan pressure to block certification. Appointment of fake electors. Incitement of violence. Desperate maneuvers in Congress on Jan. 6.

But for all it may have gotten right, the story was wrong in a deeper sense. I was uncertain that the nation’s electoral machinery could

withstand Trump's frontal assault. The system had not faced that kind of threat before. It might simply fail.

**Read more:** *The Secret History of the Shadow Campaign That Saved the 2020 Election*

But it did not. State and federal judges threw out Trump's baseless lawsuits and eventually sanctioned some of the lawyers who brought them. At critical junctures there were enough principled Republican office holders, none of them famous then—Aaron Van Langevelde on Michigan's board of state canvassers, Georgia secretary of state Brad Raffensperger, Pennsylvania lawmakers Jake Corman and Bryan Cutler, Maricopa County supervisors Clint Hickman and Bill Gates—who did their legal duty in the face of crushing pressure to go along with a coup. Trump's party recoiled, if only briefly, from the lawless violence of the mob that attacked the U.S. Capitol.

Now, four years later, I have fewer doubts about the resilience of our core exercise in democracy.

**WATCH:** *The Officials. U.S. election officials in four battleground states hold the line against organized efforts to undermine their work as they prepare for the contentious 2024 contest.*

But the arc of the evidence, based on interviews with state, local, and federal election officials, intelligence analysts, and expert observers, bends toward confidence. Since 2020, the nation's electoral apparatus has upgraded its equipment, tightened its procedures, improved its audits, and hardened its defenses against subversion by bad actors, foreign or domestic. Ballot tabulators are air-gapped from the Internet and voter-verified paper records are the norm. Bipartisan reforms enacted in 2022 make it much harder to interfere with the appointment of electors who represent a state's popular vote, and harder to block certification in Congress of the genuine electoral count. Courts continue to deny evidence-free

claims of meddling. The final word on vote-certification in key swing states rests with governors from both parties who have defied election denialism at every turn.

The system, according to everyone I asked, will hold up against Trump's efforts to break it.

The threat remains acute. Trump, backed this time by Republicans who have adopted his pre-emptive election denial, will try again to defy the voters if they choose Harris. He will have a great deal more help this time from the party apparatus and leaders at all levels. Vote counting in key swing states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin could drag out, opening a window for an army of lawyers seeking to slow or prevent a definitive result. Extremists fueled by disinformation may act on the threats they have made in recent months against polling places, [election workers](#), and other officials.



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**At the heart of that system are nonpartisan election** officials at the federal, state, county, and local level who are dedicated to delivering a free and fair election. Poll workers will verify the identity and registration of every person who casts a ballot, in person or by mail. When polls close on Election Day, sooner in some states, election workers will begin tabulating early and mail-

in ballots and in-person votes, usually on scanning machines. As they proceed, officials will secure counted ballots, compile the results from the tabulation machines, and save worksheets and (for 98% of votes cast) paper records for official and public review. The entire procedure is overseen by poll watchers from both parties.

No human enterprise that spans tens of thousands of polling places, hundreds of thousands of election officials, and more than 150 million projected voters can aspire to be flawless, says Jen Easterly, a former Army intelligence officer who directs the [Cybersecurity](#) and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). “There could be a ransomware attack on an election office,” Easterly says. “There could be a distributed denial of service attack on a website, so you can’t see election-night reporting. Somebody will forget their key to a polling place, so they could open late. A storm may bring down a power line, so a polling place needs to be moved.”

***Read more:*** [Why Hand Counting Ballots Could Create an Election Disaster](#)

What matters, she says, is that election officials have trained for all those contingencies. “They are prepared to meet the moment and to deal with any disruption,” she says. Easterly and her state counterparts play this message of reassurance on repeat, interview after interview and speech after speech. It has the virtue of being true. There really are playbooks and backup procedures and well-designed mitigation plans for every bad thing they have ever seen happen to an election, and none of those bad things pose a genuine threat to the integrity of the vote.

Easterly, a West Point graduate who oversees 3,400 employees, makes a point of talking about what could go wrong because she wants to inoculate voters against propaganda that incorporates minor incidents into a false narrative that elections are corrupt. The trouble is that Easterly and her allies are up against torrents of disinformation that are faster-propagating and incomparably more

voluminous than their earnest rebuttals. And the lies are well calculated to stoke outrage and fear, while the truth “sounds like this wonky inside-baseball bureaucratic thing,” she says.

The key period for this disinformation will be the two months between Election Day and the final count of the electoral vote in Congress on Jan. 6, 2025. As they finalize their counts, the officials will send results from individual polling places to a central office by telephone, electronic transmission, or on a memory device. Election officials will then combine those numbers with mail-ballot totals and begin posting publicly available results. Media organizations will assess the partial results, alongside exit polls, and predict winners and losers in key races and states. The Associated Press, relying on an army of reporters at polling places and election offices, will produce the most widely credited unofficial count.

- [Everything You Need to Know About Voting in the 2024 Election](#)
- [How to Survive Election Season Without Losing Your Mind](#)
- [Why Hand Counting Ballots Could Create an Election Disaster](#)
- [How to Protect Yourself from AI Election Misinformation](#)
- [How to Read Political Polls Like a Pro](#)

But several battleground states, like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, do not start processing early and mail-in ballots until after the polls close, [making a delay in results likely](#). In very close races, mandated recounts or the tallying of provisional ballots could delay the outcome for days. “It always takes time, but as margins get narrower it takes longer until the media can call the races,” says David Becker, executive director of The Center for Election Innovation and Research, a nonprofit that seeks to build trust in elections. “We’ll just have to be patient and wait for that because it’s more important to get it right than get it fast.”

Foreign disinformation about the reliability of the vote is even more pervasive in 2024 than it was in the past several election cycles. Adrian Fontes, the secretary of state of Arizona, says that confidential reports from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence have convinced him that malicious foreign-influence operations are accelerating this year. They “make us hate one another so much that we internally tear ourselves apart or we make enemies out of ourselves,” he says.

A senior U.S. intelligence officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, says the Biden Administration made a conscious decision to expand distribution of bulletins from the Foreign Malign Influence Center, an office that reports to the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), to help state and local election officials respond to an active threat. The governments of Russia, China, and Iran, according to an ODNI public update, are likely to call “into question the validity of the election’s results after the polls close.” Russia is doing what it can to help elect Trump, as it did in 2016 and 2020, according to ODNI, while Iran, [enraged](#) by Trump’s 2020 decision to assassinate Major General Qasem Soleimani, chief of the country’s Quds Force, is backing Harris. According to the senior U.S. official, China is not trying to boost either candidate but is making “broad efforts aimed at undermining trust in U.S. democratic processes and exacerbating divisions in our society.”

For all the foreign interference, Fontes, a Democrat, sees a graver problem originating from within. Like his counterparts around the country, of both parties, he names no names. “What I think is our biggest threat,” he says, “is the fact that we still have elected officials and candidates who are lying to our voters about the integrity of our elections, who are continually pushing out these stupid lies about fraud and non-citizen voting and all of this other unsubstantiated garbage.” He fears that “it’s working, sadly, because a lot of people can’t see through the bullsh-t.”



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**Trump is putting almost as much effort into discrediting November's election as he is into winning it.** This time, unlike 2020, he has well-funded and well-organized support for that effort from the Republican National Committee and state parties, allied think tanks, and dark-money operations. Together they are preparing the postelection battlefield for a sustained campaign in courts, in state legislatures, and in Congress to overturn a Harris victory. Trump campaign spokespeople did not reply to questions about why he is attempting to undermine public trust in the election and whether he will try to reverse the results if Harris wins.

"We are in an election unlike any other," said Wendy Weiser, vice president for democracy at the Brennan Center for Justice, where I am a senior adviser. "The attacks that we are seeing on the election this year are much more widespread, much better funded, much bigger than we've ever seen before, much more sophisticated."

What Trump lacks in 2024 are the powers of an incumbent President. He cannot send troops or law enforcement officers, as some allies suggested he do last time, to seize voting machines. He has no Justice Department to draft a letter to legislators in a state that he lost, falsely advising them that the department has "identified significant concerns that may have impacted the

election” and hinting that they should support “a separate slate of electors representing Donald J. Trump.”

But even out of office, Trump is wielding presidential power prospectively to benefit his campaign—by announcing to supporters and opponents what he will do for them, or to them, if he returns to office. He has frequently promised pardons for the “political prisoners” convicted of storming the Capitol on Jan. 6, another of his hints that violence on his behalf may be rewarded. In September, in a Truth Social post, he warned that “WHEN I WIN, those people that CHEATED will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the Law, which will include long term prison sentences.” He specified among his targets “Corrupt Election Officials,” along with “Lawyers, Political Operatives, Donors, [and] Illegal Voters.” Describing Harris and her supporters as “the enemy from within,” he said on Oct. 13 that the enemy “should be very easily handled by, if necessary, by National Guard, or if really necessary, by the military.”

***Read more: [The Huge Risks From AI In an Election Year](#)***

Trump’s public disinformation campaign has been amplified on [Elon Musk](#)’s social media platform X, a boost that the former President did not have in 2020. It has also been reinforced by more than 90 lawsuits brought by the Trump campaign, RNC, and other supporters to disqualify voters, prevent the counting of votes, or shorten the duration of counting, among other goals. The lawsuits, which already far exceed the number filed in the 2020 election cycle, are concentrated in the seven swing states expected to decide this year’s contest: Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina, and Georgia.

“President Trump’s election-integrity effort is dedicated to protecting every legal vote, mitigating threats to the voting process, and securing the election,” says RNC spokeswoman Claire Zunk in an emailed statement. “While Democrats continue their election

interference against President Trump and the American people, our operation is confronting their schemes and preparing for November.” As an example of “attacks on election safeguards” that the RNC fought in court, Zunk cited efforts by Georgia Democrats to extend the voter-registration deadline in parts of the state that were hard-hit by Hurricane Helene.

Many of the Trump-aligned lawsuits seem poorly tailored to prevail at trial—demands for purges of voter rolls, for example, filed after the relevant deadline. Some of the litigation could be seen as an attempt to borrow the authority of a court proceeding for thinly supported allegations of fraud to be levied if Harris wins. Several observers see another dark strategy in the current lawsuits and the preparations for others. While the vote-counting system is resilient and reliable, it must meet several immovable deadlines.



By Dec. 11, top state officials, in most cases the governor, must certify the election results. Members of the Electoral College must vote on Dec. 17. Under the U.S. Constitution, if any states remain contested when the votes are counted in Congress on Jan. 6, and neither candidate wins a majority of the electors, the decision would go to the newly elected House of Representatives. There Trump would likely prevail, thanks to the 12th Amendment’s requirement that each state cast one vote and the fact that

Republicans are likely to outnumber Democrats in a majority of state delegations.

Georgia has been a focus of GOP maneuvering to delay or deny certification of the voting results if Harris prevails. After Raffensperger, the secretary of state, refused to alter Georgia's 2020 vote count in Trump's favor, Trump tried to defeat his re-election bid. When Raffensperger won his race anyway, the Republican legislature removed him from the state election board and appointed three election deniers to form a new majority.

Trump praised the new board members by name as "pit bulls" for "victory." They passed new rules that, among other things, would empower partisan county officials to reject election results that they believed to be tainted by fraud. A state judge voided all the new rules on Oct. 16. The board also attempted to reopen a closed investigation that might enable them to fire and replace the officials who oversee elections in Fulton County, a Democratic stronghold that includes most of Atlanta.

***Read more: [Meet the Democracy Defenders](#)***

According to a high-ranking state official, Trump allies on the election board encouraged their county counterparts to refuse to certify election results if they suspected any irregularity in the conduct of the polls. By blocking certification, the state official says, Trump's allies were looking for a way, if Harris wins the state, to prevent the delivery of Georgia's 16 electoral votes to Congress. On Oct. 14, Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney put a stop to those efforts, ruling that county election officials may not "refuse to certify or abstain from certifying-election results under any circumstance."

Immediately after that ruling, according to another Georgia official who spoke on condition of anonymity, lawyers representing the Trump campaign and the state GOP asked Raffensperger's office to

rewrite the official certification form. One of the lawyers, Alex Kaufman, had been on the telephone line on Jan. 2, 2021, when Trump demanded that Raffensperger “find 11,780 votes” to reverse Joe Biden’s victory in Georgia.

What Kaufman wanted this election, the officials said, was for Raffensperger’s office to remove the words “true and correct” from the description of the count on the certification form that election-board members have been ordered to sign. They said Kaufman also requested the addition of separate signature lines for board members who wish to convey their dissent, with room for them to specify the precincts in which they object to the count. “All of this is about creating doubt,” the second Georgia official says. “And if you view it from that lens, they don’t necessarily need a county to vote down the certification. They just need some sort of doubt to be on record that they can point to, to dispute the results.”

[Raffensperger](#), in an interview, notes that he has sole authority to certify the state election. And he sounded delighted, all in all, by his removal from the Trump-aligned election board. “I’m not the chair of the mess” anymore, he says. “It’s not my monkey. It’s theirs. It’s up to them to fix it, or a judge will do it for them.” Judges have done so elsewhere. In Arizona’s Cochise County, two election supervisors were indicted last November for refusing to certify a 2022 vote there. On Oct. 21, one pleaded guilty to failing to perform her duty as an election official.

One significant obstacle for Trump, if he tries as he did in 2020 to arrange for “alternative electors” in states he loses, is that he would need active collaboration from a governor to throw out a state’s popular vote. Reforms to the Electoral Count Act give governors the presumptive power to decide which electors represent their states. Five of the battleground states this year—Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina and Arizona—have Democratic governors. Trump’s prospects with the two GOP swing-state governors do not look much better. In Georgia,

Governor Brian Kemp refused Trump's demands in 2020 to convene state lawmakers to overturn Joe Biden's victory. Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo, a Trump supporter, has nevertheless distanced himself from the six fake electors who face felony charges after trying to substitute themselves for the state's lawful Biden electors four years ago.

Like election officials in other states, Raffensperger described a long list of recent improvements in the reliability and security of voting in his bailiwick: citizenship verification, photo ID, "the cleanest voter list in the country," a new technology vendor to "audit 100% of the ballots" using human-readable paper records. As for the ubiquitous accusations of fraud, he says, "We're trying to head them off at the pass. Trying to get ahead of the curve. And we do that with facts."



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**The specter of physical conflict around this election cannot** be dismissed. Intimations of violence are regular features of Trump rhetoric, and many of his supporters may be angry enough to respond. The University of Chicago's Robert Pape, a longtime student of political violence, reported that 6% of respondents in a September survey agreed that "use of force is justified to restore Donald Trump to the presidency." Notably, he says, an additional

8% agreed that “the use of force is justified to prevent Donald Trump from becoming President.”

Indeed, would-be assassins twice made attempts on Trump’s life this summer. Although no partisan motive for either has emerged, Trump and his allies blame the assassination attempts on accusations from Biden and Harris that he is a “threat to democracy.” But Trump’s political language, Pape and other political scientists say, is qualitatively different from that of the Democrats. He has called his political opponents “vermin” and “human scum,” predicted a “bloodbath” if he is not elected, hinted that execution would be justified for the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and lavished praise on violent supporters who assaulted police at the Capitol. Pape described the survey respondents who say they support violence as dry kindling, awaiting a spark. “It is generally leaders on one side of America’s partisan divide,” he said, “who are lighting rhetorical matches.”

Election workers and officials are disproportionately on the receiving end of intimidation, doxing, and abuse. In September, Attorney General Merrick Garland described an “unprecedented spike in threats” against them. A recent Brennan Center study showed that 38% reported that they had been threatened, harassed, or abused because of their job, and 54% stated they were concerned about the safety of their colleagues and staff.

One state election official, explaining her insistence on anonymity, says, “I cannot emphasize this enough. I hate being quoted because every time my name gets out there, I get really nasty death threats. Because I’m a woman, they tend to be a little bit more graphic than the death threats that [her boss] gets, and it is jarring.” Asked for an example, she replies, “It’s always rape. Every single time it’s rape.”

Maricopa County Recorder Stephen Richer has stood at the white hot center of Arizona’s defense against election denial since 2020, and says he sees it gathering momentum again now. “There were

some pretty dark moments,” he says, when he had to take daylong breaks away from his phone, doing “grunt labor” to clear his mind. Richer strikes competing notes of exhaustion and perverse pride that he holds the state record, as far as he knows, for death threats that have led to criminal charges. (The number is five.) The defendants have come from California, Missouri, Virginia, Alabama, and, most recently, Texas. One caller, Richer says, promised to kill him and his kids for stealing the election from Trump, saying “Children aren’t off limits.” (Richer has no children.) He also, Richer recalls, said: “I want to throw that Jew in an oven so badly, I can taste it.”

Richer is not sure how well the justice system’s response to these threats is working. “Somebody sends you a grotesque voice message to your personal cell phone,” he says. “You report it. And then what is your reward? You have to go, you know, get prepped for trial. You have to respond to subpoenas. And then you have to fly to Missouri at the beginning of December to get, I don’t know, examined in trial and have to face the jackass who said this.”

MAGA Republicans put up a candidate to challenge Richer and successfully ousted him in a primary this summer. The current presidential election will be his last, and he won’t miss the stress of running the next one. “I’m worn out,” he says.

Other veterans of the election-disinformation wars are sticking it out. Pennsylvania secretary of state Al Schmidt, like Richer a Republican, became the target of persistent, personal attacks by Trump when he supervised 2020 election operations in Philadelphia. He found it shocking then. Now he has become inured. “There is a big difference between this election cycle and 2020,” he says. “In 2020, all of this ugliness was new. Election officials had never been portrayed as combatants before. So I think one unfortunate advantage to this election cycle is people are, election officials are fully aware of the level of scrutiny and likelihood of reckless accusations that might come their way.”

***Read more: [11 Things to Say to Persuade Someone to Vote](#)***

Schmidt adds: “I think everyone that I know, everyone that I’ve met, isn’t going to let any of that [get] in the way of them doing their job.” But that is not entirely true, he admits. “Since 2020, Pennsylvania has lost more than 80 senior-level election officials. We only have 67 counties,” he says.

Neither violence nor the threat of it is likely to have any meaningful impact on the vote count. Since 2020, state and county officials have taken extensive steps to build in layers of security. In Maricopa County, the tabulation center is now surrounded by a sturdy wall, guarded by law-enforcement teams, and surveilled by drones. In Durham County, North Carolina, says elections director Derek L. Bowens, “we also activate our emergency-response center on Election Day and we have patrols of polling locations.” Staff members in every precinct will wear an “alert badge” that summons help at the press of a button. Police officers in all 50 states will be carrying pocket guides to election law, and law-enforcement groups like the National Sheriffs Association are teaming up with election officials for contingency planning.

Law enforcement has already been cracking down as part of an effort to deter violence. More than half of the 700 threats cases brought by the U.S. Department of Justice in the past two years have been for threats against federal and state public officials, judges, prosecutors, law-enforcement officers, and election workers, according to public statements by Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. Also an effective deterrent, law-enforcement officials hope, are the convictions of more than 1,000 people for their roles in the riot at the Capitol. One received a sentence of more than 20 years in prison.



**Trump could win this election outright. Absent that, if he has any path to return to power against the will of the voters, it would rely on an improbable decision by Congress or the Supreme Court to discard the results from one or more states that Harris wins. If those electoral votes are not counted, leaving neither candidate with 270, Trump's allies could call for what's known as a “contingent election” decided by the newly seated House.**

Alternatively, if Republicans win both the House and the Senate, they could attempt to certify Trump's victory with fewer than 270 electoral votes, provided that he had a majority of the electoral votes that had not been thrown out.

But these scenarios, and others like them, are remote. One way or another, every election administrator I spoke with agreed, voters will be verified and cast their ballots. The ballots will be counted as cast and audited with paper records. The canvass will be certified, even if a partisan election board tries to balk. The popular vote in every state will control the appointment of electors. Congress will certify the electoral vote, with clear new rules laid out in statutory reforms enacted into law in 2022. And nothing will prevent the only outcome that our constitutional democracy can abide: the winner of the election will be sworn in as the 47th President on Jan. 20, 2025.

Meanwhile, the assault on truth will continue unabated in the ceaseless effort by Trump—in parallel with hostile foreign powers—to sow chaos in our electoral system and undermine faith in the results. “We know it’s a psyops campaign,” says Fontes, the Arizona secretary of state. “We’ve known that since 2016. This is an intentional erosion of the binding force of society in the United States of America.”

Easterly, whose predecessor at CISA was fired by Trump for calling the 2020 election secure and accurate, says, “It is incredibly irresponsible for anyone in a position of power to call into question the security or the integrity or confidence in our elections,” she says. “They really are acting as instruments of our foreign enemies.” The only solution she can envision is for everyone “to come together as Americans in a united way and resist these foreign malign adversaries who very clearly want to weaken our nation,” she says. “And it is up to all of us not to let them.”

Democracy, after all, gives more than one power to the people. We not only cast our ballots but exercise our judgment when exposed to the lies of a psychological operation. We don’t have to fall for them. —*With reporting by Leslie Dickstein and Simmone Shah*

*Gellman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author, is senior adviser at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law*

Correction, October 24

The original version of this story misstated the number of CISA employees overseen by the agency’s director Jen Easterly. It is 3,400 not 2,200.

Correction, October 27

The original version of this story misstated the name of the organization for which David Becker is the executive director. It is

The Center for Election Innovation and Research, not Election  
Innovation and Research.

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<https://time.com/7096453>

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## How We Picked the Best Inventions of 2024



Every year for over two decades, TIME editors have highlighted the most impactful new products and ideas in [TIME's Best Inventions issue](#). To compile this year's list, we solicited nominations from TIME's editors and correspondents around the world, and through an online application process, paying special attention to growing fields—such as health care, AI, and green energy. We then evaluated each contender on a number of key factors, including originality, efficacy, ambition, and impact.

The result is a list of 200 groundbreaking inventions (and 50 special mention inventions)—including the world's largest computer chip, a humanoid robot joining the workforce, and a bioluminescent houseplant—that are changing how we live, work, play, and think about what's possible.

Read the full list [here](#).

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<https://time.com/7099118>

## The Death of Yahya Sinwar

Karl 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.



The corpse of Yahya Sinwar was found in the landscape he envisioned—the dusty rubble of an apocalyptic war ignited by the sneak attack he had planned in secret for years, and launched on Oct. 7, 2023. The catch was that the fighting extended only 25 miles east and at most four miles south from the shattered villa in southern Gaza where the Hamas leader died one year and nine days later. “The big project,” as Hamas [called](#) Sinwar’s plan, had not engulfed the whole of the Middle East as hoped, nor brought about the collapse of Israel. Ground zero for the apocalypse remains the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian enclave Sinwar governed when he unleashed the attack that led to its destruction.

Terror aims to provoke an over-reaction. If the first phase of Oct. 7 —breaching the fence erected by Israel and overrunning its military bases—was an audacious military operation, the assault on the

civilian settlements beyond was something else. During his 22 years in Israeli prison, Sinwar was an avid student not only of Hebrew but also of Jewish history, including pogroms. His [2011 release](#) brought another lesson: Sinwar, known at the time as the “Butcher of Khan Yunis” for his brutality in dispatching suspected informers, returned to Gaza among more than 1,000 Palestinian prisoners that Israel [traded](#) for the freedom of a single Jewish soldier. As Israeli hostage negotiator David Meidan [has observed](#): “The matter of captives is our soft underbelly.”



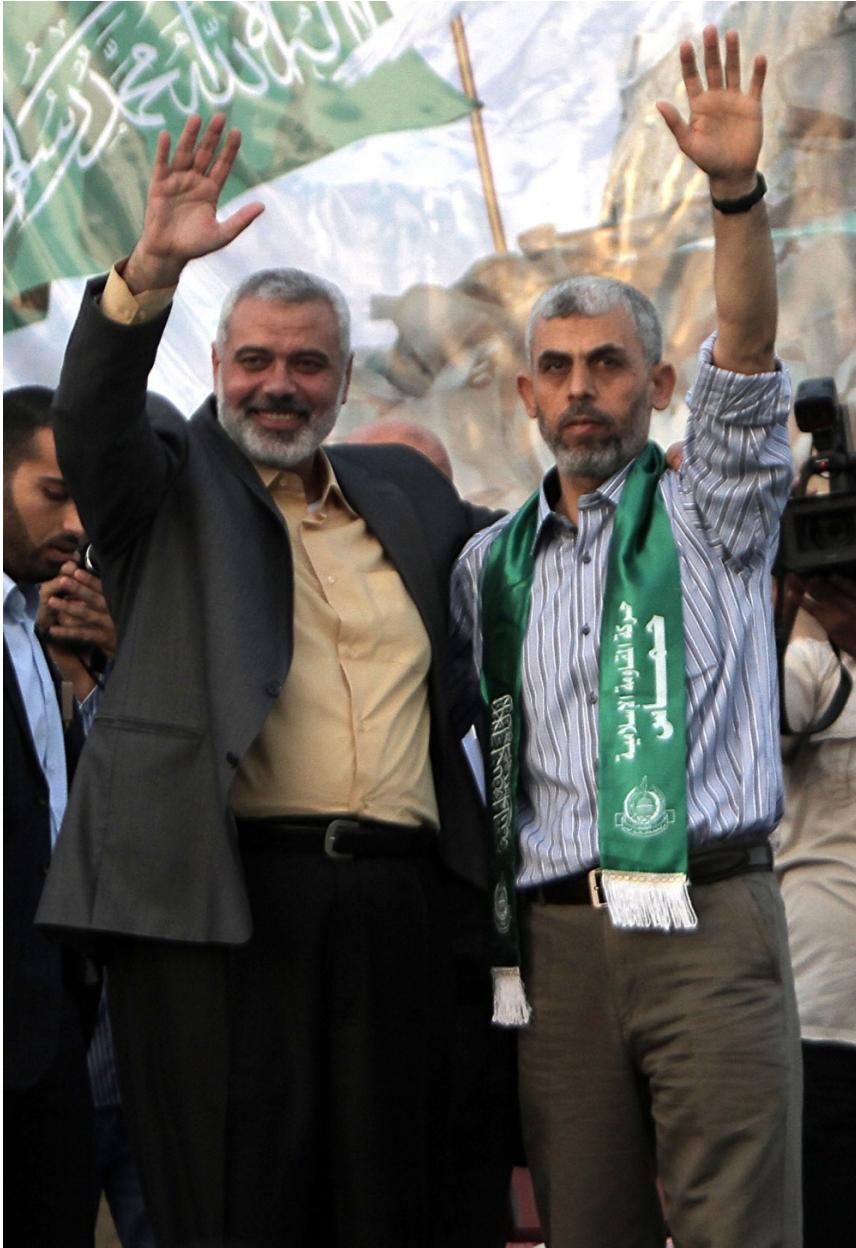
Sinwar's death may open the door to a cease-fire that frees the dozens of Israeli hostages who remain in Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, having resisted a deal while the architect of

the worst terrorist attack in the nation's history remained at large, was described in reports as more open to one [in a call](#) with President Joe Biden on Thursday. What has moved beyond imagination is negotiations of any other kind.

**Read More:** *The Families of Hostages On Life After Oct. 7.*

By Sinwar's grim math of mass murder, the primary calculation is body counts. The Palestinian question is back on the world agenda, and Israel's global reputation, already suffering with its half-century occupation of Palestinian territories, is deeply stained.

[Most polls](#) over the last year have shown Palestinians more inclined to embrace the militancy of Hamas, an Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement. But those things matter most in the realm of negotiated peace that Hamas rejects: Camp David and Oslo were the prism through which the world viewed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Oct. 7 shattered it.



In the ruins of Gaza, however, where [1.9 million people](#) have fled their homes and the risk of famine grows, support for the Oct. 7 attack shows signs of [slipping](#). Confronting Israel on military terms allows Israel to frame the Palestinian question as a question not of national aspiration, or of justice, but as a question of security. And, especially with the \$17.9 billion in [U.S. military aid](#) this year, security is Israel's strong suit. Caught flat footed by Sinwar's assault, it has since moved methodically against the forces Hamas had hoped would come to its aid—Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and their common sponsor, Iran. This month Israeli columns were also heading back to Gaza's north, shutting

down food aid and warning residents to evacuate or be regarded as targets.

**Read More:** *Exclusive: Netanyahu At War.*

By the count of the Hamas government he led, Sinwar, 61, was preceded in death by 42,438 of his constituents, more than half of them women and children. The whereabouts of his own family was unknown, but thought to appear briefly in surveillance footage recovered earlier this year from an underground redoubt Israeli forces said was located beneath a cemetery. In it, Sinwar moves single file into a tunnel, behind a girl clutching a doll and a boy using a flip phone as a flashlight.



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## Why the Family of the Menendez Brothers Are Calling for Their Release

Solcyré (Sol) Burga is a general assignment reporter at TIME. She covers U.S. news with a focus on student loans and LGBTQ+ issues.



Family members of Erik and Lyle Menendez, the two brothers serving a life sentence for fatally shooting their parents—Jose and Kitty Menendez—in their Beverly Hills home in 1989, called for the pair's release and resentencing at a Wednesday news conference in Los Angeles.

During the press conference, family members announced a new coalition to advocate for “[Justice for Erik and Lyle](#)” and urged people to sign a petition asking the District Attorney to move forward with a resentencing for the pair. L.A. County District Attorney George Gascón announced earlier this month that he was “keeping an open mind” about a possible resentencing for the brothers. Erik and Lyle were convicted for the murders in 1996, and are both serving a life sentence without parole.

“Like so many others, I struggled to process the events of that fateful August day and the loss that I felt over time. It became clear that there were two other victims there on that day, my cousins, Lyle and Erik,” said Anamaria Baralt, a cousin of the brothers. “If Lyle and Erik’s case were heard today with the understanding we now have about abuse and PTSD, there is no doubt in my mind that their sentencing would have been very different.”

Mark Geragos, a lawyer representing the brothers, cited new evidence in the case, including a letter Erik wrote to his cousin which mentions the abuse months before the slayings, and a declaration by Roy Rossello, member of boyband Menudo, alleging that Jose Menendez had also abused him.

The case recently re-entered the spotlight after the release of the Netflix series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* in September, though there have been previous documentaries detailing the case.

**Read more:** *How Ryan Murphy’s Menendez Brothers Show Has Reignited a Decades-Long Controversy*

Some celebrities, including Rosie O’Donnell and Kim Kardashian, who penned a [personal essay](#) for NBC News asking for the two to be freed, have advocated on the brothers behalf.

Here’s what to know.

## What happened

In Aug. 1989, police began investigating the murder of Jose and Kitty Menendez, the parents of Erik and Lyle Menendez. Officers first came to their Beverly Hills home on Aug. 8, 1989 after Lyle called 911 claiming that “someone killed my parents.” Lyle, then 21, and Erik Menendez, then 18, initially told police they came home and found their parents had been shot and killed. But the

following March, investigators received a tip stating that the Menendez brothers had [admitted to killing their parents on tape to a psychologist](#).

**Read more:** [\*The True Story Behind Ryan Murphy's Menendez Brothers Series\*](#)

On March 8, 1990, Lyle was arrested. Erik surrendered two days later to authorities when he arrived at Los Angeles International Airport. Their first trial didn't come until three years later.

Eventually, the brothers confessed that they shot their parents as an act of self-defense. During the first trial, family members and friends testified that the Menendez brothers had suffered abuse, including sexual abuse in their home. The brothers claimed they shot their parents because they thought they were going to kill them so they would not reveal that their father had molested them.

Prosecutors, however, argued that the brothers had fatally shot their parents because they wanted their parents' estate. Shortly after their parents' murders, the brothers notably spent their wealth on Rolex watches and business investments. The jury of the first trial was deadlocked, and ultimately a mistrial was declared.

A second trial in 1995 went in a different direction. The brothers were tried together and parts of the evidence of abuse were declared inadmissible in court. In March 1996, Lyle and Erik were found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole. They have served 34 years so far.

## Why the D.A. could revisit the case

In 2023 Geragos said that he filed a petition of habeas corpus with the Los Angeles Superior Court, seeking to overturn their conviction. "If the habeas would be granted, you would get a new trial," he said during Wednesday's press conference. "If they are

resentenced, the judge under California law has the ability to recall and sentence them to a wide range of options.”

Attorneys for the Menendez brothers say that Erik and Lyle would have received different sentences if the trials had happened today, as today’s culture is more supportive of victims of abuse.

**Read more:** *The Menendez Brothers Are Back in the Spotlight. Here's What to Read and Watch to Understand Their Case*

Attorneys representing the pair have pointed to new evidence to show in the case that proves allegations that Erik’s father sexually abused him. Part of that evidence includes a letter written by Erik to his cousin, Andy Cano. In the letter, which was written in December 1988, Erik said: “I’ve been trying to avoid dad. It’s still happening Andy but it’s worse for me now... Every night I stay up thinking he might come in.”

Rossello’s testimony that he was also abused by Jose Menendez is also going to be presented.

“Given the totality of the circumstances, I don’t think they deserve to be in prison until they die,” [L.A. District Attorney George Gascón told co-anchor Juju Chang in an IMPACT x Nightline episode set to be released on Hulu Thursday.](#)

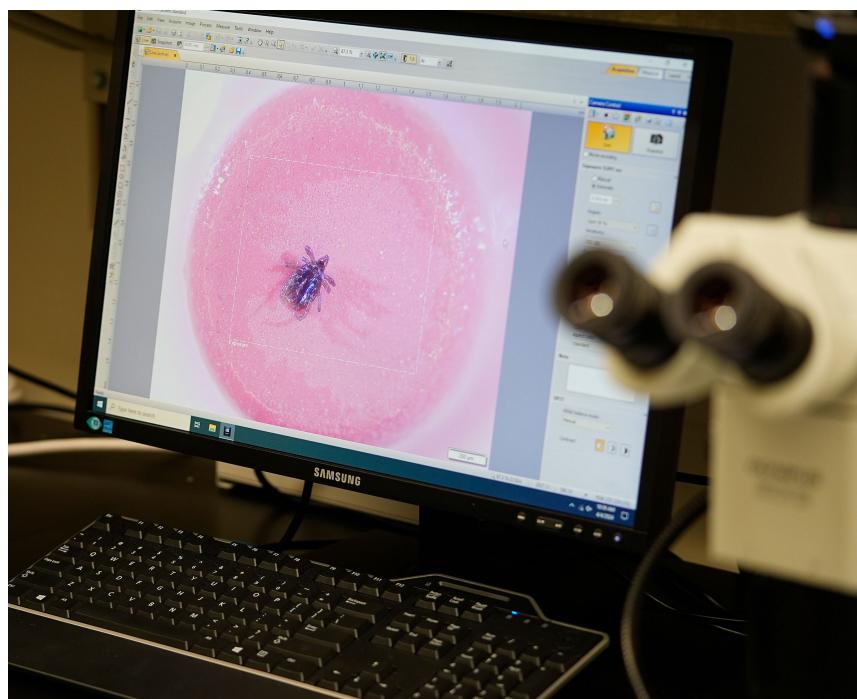
A hearing for the habeas petition is set for Nov. 29 in Los Angeles.

“I had no idea of the extent of the abuse they suffered at the hands of my brother-in-law. None of us did, but looking back, I can see the fear... their father had instilled in them,” Kitty Menendez’s sister, Joan VanderMolen, said at the press conference. “They were just children, children who could have been protected, and were instead brutalized in the most horrific ways.”

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## ‘American Malaria’ Is on the Rise

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



Few things will leave you feeling quite so grossed out as returning from a jaunt outside and finding a tick clinging to your skin. Not only is the unwelcome parasite sucking the blood from your body, but it may also be leaving something behind: bacteria, viruses, or parasites that can cause at least 15 different diseases, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [Lyme disease](#), [Powassan virus](#), [Rocky Mountain spotted fever](#), and [Heartland virus](#) are just a few of them.

Another, [babesiosis](#), is causing particular concern. The disease is colloquially known as “American malaria,” partly because of its ever-widening spread and partly because of its clinical profile. Like malaria, the disease is caused by a parasite (carried by ticks instead

of mosquitoes) that infects red blood cells. And like malaria, it can lead to headache, fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, altered mental state, anemia, low blood pressure, respiratory distress, and more.

Now, a new [paper](#) published in the journal *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* found that more Americans are getting babesiosis—often alongside other tick-related infections.

Paddy Ssentongo, an infection disease fellow at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, and his colleagues studied more than 3,500 Americans with babesiosis from 2015 to 2022. Their first striking finding is how fast the disease is exploding across the U.S. population. In the seven-year span of the survey, cases of babesiosis increased an average of 9% per year—due, the researchers concluded, to a [warming world which is expanding the range of the black-legged tick](#), the principal babesiosis vector. In the Northeast, the spread has been astronomical: babesiosis grew by [1,422% in Maine](#) from 2011 to 2019, and [1,602% in Vermont](#) during the same period, for example.

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

The ticks are not making their way to new habitats on their own, but rather are hitching rides aboard one of their principal hosts—the white-tailed deer, [who are expanding their own range](#), drawn by warmer temperatures and reduced snowpack.

Geography isn't the only problem. Ticks are also carrying more pathogens. The ticks may travel on deer, but they pick up disease [by feeding on mice and other small mammals](#); if those hosts are carrying Lyme disease or babesiosis or other infectious agents, the parasite will pick them up too—and pass them on to a human it bites. That's a big problem, as the researchers found.

Of the people in the sample group who were found to be carrying babesiosis, 42% were also infected with one or more tick-borne diseases. Of those, 41% also had Lyme disease; 3.7% had ehrlichiosis; and 0.3% had anaplasmosis.

On its face, that seems like bad news. The wide-ranging symptoms of [babesiosis](#) can be especially dangerous in people with compromised immune systems or those who have had their spleen removed during treatment for some cancers, blood diseases, or cirrhosis of the liver. [Ehrlichiosis also leads to](#) fever, chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and confusion, and in later stages can cause brain damage, uncontrolled bleeding, respiratory failure, and death. [Anaplasmosis can lead to](#) similar symptoms and potentially fatal breakdowns, including respiratory failure and bleeding problems.

Paradoxically, however, the researchers found that infection with more than one of these pathogens at the same time may actually have something of a protective effect. The risk of death from babesiosis turned out to be higher among the people who were infected with that disease alone, as opposed to those who had coinfections.

### **Read More:** [\*Here's Exactly What to Do If You Find a Tick on You\*](#)

“Having both babesiosis and Lyme disease seemed not to be associated with worse mortality,” Ssentongo said in a [statement](#) accompanying the release of the study. “It’s speculated that the concurrent presence of other tick-borne infections in the blood could alter the immune response by possibly ‘boosting’ it to effectively fight infections.”

That’s not the only reason people with co-infections may do better than those with babesiosis alone. The typical treatment for babesiosis is a combination dose of the antibiotics azithromycin and atovaquone. The front-line treatment for Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and ehrlichiosis is a different antibiotic, doxycycline.

People who are co-infected with one or more of those diseases along with babesiosis are more likely to be treated with doxycycline as well. That, says Ssentongo, raises the question as to whether that antibiotic is effective against the babesia parasite—a question that requires more research.

Of course, the best way to deal with any of these tick-borne diseases is not to get infected with them in the first place. Wearing long-sleeved shirts and full-length pants, tucking pant cuffs into socks, [wearing insect repellent](#), showering after coming inside, and running a full-body check for ticks are all proven infection preventives.

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## Even in Death, Liam Payne Couldn't Escape the Glare of the Internet



Last week, One Direction singer [Liam Payne died](#) unexpectedly at the age of 31 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. You likely heard about it in fragments, messages popping up on your home screen from lit-up group chats or breaking news push notifications, or after putting together the pieces of contextless tweets like, “This can’t be real” or “I’m literally so shocked right now.”

Facts (and misinformation) were hitting us out of order thanks to the non-chronological timelines of social media sites like X, Instagram, and TikTok. The last hours and minutes of Payne’s life were eerily documented on his own personal Snapchat, highlighting the fragile immediacy of death. Conspiracies, unconfirmed accounts from supposed onlookers, and blame laid at the feet of the ex-girlfriend who had recently issued the singer a cease and desist followed each other in quick succession.

Dormant X (formerly Twitter) 1D stan accounts immediately logged in for the first time in years—the band had been on an [indefinite hiatus](#) since 2016—and at the same time that some

claimed the news simply couldn't be true, others were dissuading us from clicking on a callous TMZ report that showed cropped pictures of recognizable tattoos on the singer's lifeless body. All the while, authorities were still piecing together what exactly had happened and his [family](#) and loved ones were still in the process of being informed.

**Read more:** [Liam Payne Is Mourned by Peers and Fans](#)

Liam Payne's untimely death, to put it plainly, has become an internet phenomenon, which makes sense given that his whole adult life was one too.

Payne first auditioned for *The X Factor*, the show that would make him a global superstar, in 2008 when he was 14 years old. But it wasn't until two years later that Simon Cowell cherry-picked him as one-fifth of his next big boy band venture. The rest, as One Direction would later sing in 2016 in their final single, is [history](#).

From the second Payne joined Harry Styles, Niall Horan, Louis Tomlinson, and Zayn Malik to form One Direction, the quintet was documented. That's in part because they were on, at that point, the biggest show on primetime British television. But away from the terrestrial airwaves, they were breaking barriers online.

YouTube, founded just a handful of years before the band, became the breeding ground for their global success. It was where they posted their weekly video diaries detailing their competition experience on the now infamous stairs of their shared *X Factor* house. Those clips found their way onto Tumblr, then a new, semi-secluded home of fandom on the internet, and later Twitter—which, thanks to Justin Bieber's success a few years earlier, was a tried-and-tested soft-power play area for pop fans to create global impact.

One Direction was only on *The X Factor* for 10 weeks (they came in third), but it was enough time to harness a legion of fans who were everywhere all at once. Their first single, “What Makes You Beautiful,” debut album *Up All Night*, and first world tour came less than a year later, in 2011, and they kept on that pummeling schedule of releasing and touring for the next five years. With every new drop, their fan army grew stronger and more devout and systematically changed the way pop music was consumed through an online lens. Directioners—any fandom worth its salt needs a nickname—constituted what can fairly be called a new wave of Beatlemania for the internet age. Barely a week went by where they didn’t smash a chart or YouTube record, and when the band went on tour in 2013, 5,000 fans camped outside their hotel in Mexico City.

Before the [benefits](#) and drawbacks of parasocial relationships with celebrities became the subject of common discourse, pop svengalis like Cowell capitalized on fans’ voracious appetites. In 2013, One Direction took part in a [seven-hour online livestream](#) called 1D Day, which was part *Big Brother*, part behind-the-scenes featurette, and part late-night chat show as a way to give back to the fans.

Away from what One Direction produced, the internet of the early 2010s created pocket havens for fans. 1D communities thrived in online spaces where people with niche interests and manifestations of their fandom (such as fanfiction and fan art) could find like-minded compatriots. Some of that was wholesome, and much has been made in the last few days of the tangible ways that the fan community impacted peoples’ real lives. In that safe space of unbridled adoration, some found friends for life, career opportunities, and even romantic partners. But it could also be invasive, as with the fans who engaged in stalking behaviour or “[shipped](#)” members in ways that made them uncomfortable to the point where band members themselves criticized the practice in the media.

In 2015, the band faced its first big blow with the departure of Zayn Malik. That week, [four million](#) fans used the hashtag #AlwaysInOurHeartsZaynMalik to express their grief. Then, less than six months later, the group's remaining members parted ways. They called it a "hiatus," but boy band fans have heard that one before. At their last ever concert in 2016, Niall Horan ended the show by promising: "We will be back."

When Liam Payne went out on his own in 2017, it was an exercise in how a boy-bander should [go solo](#), with collab features from hit artists like Quavo and J Balvin and the lead single for a major movie, *Fifty Shades Freed*. But goodwill shifted with the release of his debut album, *LP1*, in 2019, which was relentlessly torn apart by critics and debuted outside the Billboard Hot 100. This fall from grace, for a member of one of the biggest cultural behemoths of all time, was too delicious for people not to mock on Twitter.

After that, Payne slipped out of favor not just with the public at large but with Directioners. When he was in One Direction, he was pegged very early on as the "dad" of the group. He wasn't the oldest member, but his lame jokes and slightly too-earnest takes elicited a kind of endearing embarrassment. But as the public view shifted, the same qualities that once made him lovably cringe were skewered as shameless and awkward. A weird interview on the Oscars red carpet where his accent jumped all over the place landed firmly in the Twitter meme reaction lexicon; a video of his choreography to the single "Strip That Down" got the [dance trend](#) treatment nobody wants on TikTok, and an ill-conceived interview with perhaps the most divisive figure in YouTube history, Logan Paul, during which he talked about a physical altercation with one of his One Direction bandmates, led him to publicly seek treatment for substance and alcohol abuse.

If his death was an online storm, then the weeks leading up to it were a red alert.

Over the last month, new discourse had started brewing about Payne's alleged behavior. After courting attention at his ex-bandmate Niall Horan's solo concert in Argentina, fans online started to rip him apart, bringing back to light accusations of physical and emotional abuse made by his ex-fiancée Maya Henry, which she then publicly discussed on her own TikTok page. After that, more girls, many of them fans who claim to have been underage at the time, came forward with their own accounts of inappropriate behaviour by Payne. At the time of his death, the conversation around him had reached a fever pitch, and it seemed like some kind of reckoning, or at least a response from Payne, was imminent. That never happened.

The internet is a much different place than it was 14 years ago, when Payne first emerged as a fresh-faced teenager. The thriving pockets of community that bolstered One Direction's early fandom barely exist now. Instead, everything is funnelled into two or three apps whose algorithms favor the most inflammatory opinions. Adults and children are thrown together into one town square where nuance, as we all know, has long since gone to die. This is exemplified by the ways in which people were tying themselves in knots to appropriately grieve Payne's death without angering anyone critical of his alleged behavior. (Spoiler: it can't be done.)

Our relationship to celebrity has also changed. The internet of the late 2010s where A-listers and their fans broke digital bread together is no more, with most celebrities having learned the downside of letting people have too much access to their lives. You need only look at the [backlash to Chappell Roan's recent plea for privacy](#) to see just how much we've turned artists into friends, then idols, then personal playthings in a few short years.

Liam Payne's fame spanned the entirety of that cultural shift on the internet, and it's probably fair to say that the sky-scraping highs of his early online power turning into engagement-garnering meme fodder took its toll. One Direction broke the mold for celebrities in

many ways, but fundamentally in how they marked a sea change in how a constant, monetized, live-streaming camera lens is pointed at even their darkest moments.

The fallout of the internet storm of Liam Payne's passing is still unfolding. Conversations have opened up about how to publicly mourn whatever version of someone you once loved, while also making space for the ways that others claim to have been hurt by them.

The four remaining members of One Direction came together for the first time in nine years to release a joint statement on Instagram about their loss, as well as making personal statements that included photos with Payne from their early days. Memorials have been organized online to take place all over the world, video clips and emotional fan edits have been shared, and the group's music streams have skyrocketed as fans gather digitally to cherish what they didn't expect to lose.

The fandom that shaped the online world as we know it has had to come together in a way they never imagined. One Direction changed the internet, and Liam Payne was always going to be immortalized by it. But that fact has never been more sobering than in his death.

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# The Elegance and Awkwardness of NASA's New Moon Suit, Designed by Axiom and Prada

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



The first time NASA unveiled a new spacesuit, President John Kennedy was in attendance. It was 1961, and Kennedy had traveled to Cape Canaveral for an inspection tour, where a suit technician with the pitch-perfect name [Joe Kosmo](#) was set to model the pressure garment the [original seven astronauts](#) would wear during their journeys aloft aboard their tiny Mercury capsules. Kosmo appeared before Kennedy as promised, and demonstrated the ease with which he could bend and flex inside the inflatable suit. He then told the president that the gloves were manipulable enough to allow him to pick up a coin—if only he had one.

Kennedy reached into his pants pocket, took out a quarter, and placed it on the floor. Kosmo bent, plucked it up, and offered it back to Kennedy.

“Keep it,” the president said. “A souvenir.” Half a century later, Kosmo still had the coin.

The latest NASA spaceware unveiled this week did not receive the same attention. There were no heads of state present at the [International Astronautical Congress in Milan, Italy](#), when Houston-based aerospace company [Axiom Space](#), and the Italian fashion giant [Prada Group](#) debuted their new space suit. The suit is far more elaborate than the long-ago Mercury model and far more expensive, the product of a \$228-million contract NASA issued to Axiom in 2022. But there is good reason for the bump in price and complexity: as early as the end of 2026, the spacesuits will be worn at the south pole of the moon by the crew of Artemis III, when they press the first boot prints on the lunar surface since the mission of [Apollo 17](#), in 1972.

“We are pioneering a new era in space exploration where partnerships are imperative to the commercialization of space,” said Russell Ralston, Axiom’s Executive Vice President of Extravehicular Activity (EVA, or lunar spacewalks), in a statement. “For the first time, we are leveraging expertise in other industries to craft a better solution for space.”

The Axiom-Prada partnership started two years ago, shortly after Axiom won its NASA contract. The company tapped [Esther Marquis](#), the costume designer for the [Apple TV space series “For All Mankind”](#), to design the look of the suit, but no sooner was she onboard than Prada reached out with an offer to assist as well. Ralston liked the idea, [telling The New York Times](#) that a partnership with a luxury fashion brand “actually makes a lot of sense because a spacesuit is a unique thing.” He tasked Prada with selecting and sourcing materials for the suit and working with Marquis on the overall aesthetics. Meanwhile Axiom engineers developed the insulation, articulated joints, life-support systems, and more that make an extravehicular spacesuit a sort of form-fitting spacecraft.

The suit that resulted from this collaboration is, like the Apollo lunar suits of half a century ago, equal parts awkward and elegant. On Earth, the Apollo models and their accompanying backpacks [tipped the scales at 180 lbs.](#), which would have made bounding about the lunar surface in them all-but impossible, if not for the moon's one-sixth gravity which reduced the load to just 30 lbs. Today's Artemis-era suits are, if anything, heavier still. Axiom will not reveal their exact weight, as that is proprietary information, but Ralston does say they are a few hundred pounds.

The additional weight is owed partly to the region of the moon Artemis astronauts will be exploring. Unlike the six Apollo landing crews, who explored plains, highlands, and mountains in a more or less equatorial band, the Artemis astronauts will land at the south lunar pole, where ice—which can be harvested for water, breathable oxygen, and hydrogen-oxygen rocket fuel—exists in permanently shadowed craters. [Temperatures at the Apollo landing sites](#) ranged from 250°F (121°C) in the glare of the sun to -208°F (-133°C) in the shadows. In the permanently shaded regions of the south pole, the thermometer bottoms out at a far lower -373°F (-225°C). That requires more robust insulation, which adds weight, but also adds time to the astronauts' field trips. The new suit, said Ralston in an email to TIME, "can perform eight-hour spacewalks, a two-hour increase over Apollo-era EVAs."

That greater surface time is thanks to the suits' three-layer design. The innermost layer is a set of full-body long-johns, shot through with tubing that carries cool water from neck to toes to prevent the astronauts from overheating in the raw sunlight. Surrounding the cooling garment is an airtight pressure layer—the portion of the suit that does the true heavy lifting in keeping the astronauts alive in the airless environment of the moon. Surrounding that is the environmental protective garment (EPG), the heavy, visible, outer covering of the suit that protects the astronauts from cuts and punctures on a lunar terrain that bristles with jagged rocks and scarp. Last year, Axiom revealed an early iteration of that outer

layer, done up in dark colors to hide other proprietary elements. The model unveiled this week is sewn in its proper white, which will reflect excessive sunlight away to prevent the crew from overheating, as well as making it easier to spot and brush away fine lunar dust, which is notorious for fouling zippers and joints after even a single moonwalk.

The quarter-billion dollar R&D cost will come down as the Artemis program plays out over future landings, and more and more astronauts wear the new suits. Unlike Apollo-era suits, each one of which was measured and cut to the particular astronaut who would be wearing it, the Axiom-Prada suits are modular, with snap-in and snap-out limbs and torsos that accommodate women and men from the 1st percentile in body size to the 99th percentile. Ralston touts this “plug and play adaptability” as an effective way to keep costs down and manufacturing efficiency high.

For viewers back home, it will be the outer layer of the suit, not the guts of it, that will make the biggest impression. Prada’s triangular trademark is not featured on the suit, as it is Axiom that took the lead in the development, but the latter company’s “AX” logo, sewn in gray on the suits’ torso, will be visible, as will its full name on the backpack. As with the Apollo suits, the one the commander wears will include red piping to help distinguish one crew member from the other, since their faces will be obscured by their reflective helmet faceplates. Gray patches sewn to the knees and elbows of the spacesuits both add visual grace notes and protect against cuts and punctures during the inevitable tumbles astronauts make while bunny-hopping across the lunar surface.

“While the knee and elbow pads are designed to enable flexibility and decrease impacts on the suit and the astronaut, the color gray is an aesthetic design choice,” says Ralston. “These pads will include added insulation and robustness against lunar dust.”

Whether NASA can actually make its September 2026 target date for the crewed Artemis III landing is very much open to question. The Artemis II mission, a simple-by-comparison circumlunar journey around the far side of the moon and straight back home, has already been postponed from its original launch date of September 2024 to November 2025 due to budget constraints and challenges in heat shield design. Artemis III, with its requirement of a separate lunar landing vehicle that has not even gotten out of the very preliminary design phase, much less been built, flown, and tested, will be hard pressed to launch in two years.

The betting here is that American boots will indeed return to the moon, but not before the end of this decade. Still, when that mission does fly, the matter of what the crews will wear has at least been thoughtfully, artfully, gracefully settled.

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# Documentarian Says He's Solved the Mystery of Bitcoin's Creator. Insiders Are Extremely Skeptical

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



**This article contains spoilers for *Money Electric: The Bitcoin Mystery*.**

Who is Bitcoin's founder, Satoshi Nakamoto? The question has perplexed and excited cryptocurrency fans ever since Bitcoin was created by someone with that username in 2009. Fans have endlessly theorized, debated and hunted for clues across the web, while investigative journalists have tried to unwind the mystery with [no success](#). To Bitcoin acolytes, Satoshi's identity matters because their ideas are imbued with near-religious significance: “It’s the immaculate conception,” Bitcoin investor Michael Saylor [said](#) this year.

Satoshi, who has not publicly communicated in years, also sits on an enormous stash of Bitcoin: over one million of them, which is about 5% of the total supply and would make him worth around

\$60 billion: roughly the 25th richest person alive. His return to the markets could send enormous shocks through an already volatile ecosystem.

Now, a documentary filmmaker is arguing that he's identified Satoshi—and contends that Bitcoin's founder didn't walk away at all, but rather has played a significant role in shaping the technology's development.

In *Money Electric: The Bitcoin Mystery*, which streams on October 8 on Max, filmmaker Cullen Hoback spends three years traveling the world with early Bitcoin mavens before reaching a conclusion: that Satoshi is Peter Todd, a [39-year-old](#) Canadian Bitcoin developer, whose ideas and hot temper have earned him notoriety in the Bitcoin community.

In an email to TIME, Todd denied that he is Satoshi. “I’m not Satoshi,” he wrote. “I discovered Bitcoin first from reading the whitepaper, as I’ve said publicly many times.”

Four other early Bitcoiners who spoke to TIME expressed skepticism that Todd could be Satoshi, based on their knowledge of Todd’s coding ability and temperament. But Hoback is confident he’s come to the right conclusion. “People have a vision of who they want it to be: They want someone perfect, who matches their ideals,” Hoback says. “But this is where the evidence lies—and I think the case is so strong.”

## Hoback Investigates the Cypherpunks

In 2021, Hoback’s docuseries about the QAnon conspiracy, *Q: Into the Storm*, ran on HBO. In it, Hoback makes a case that Ron Watkins, a former administrator of the social network 8Chan, is the conspiracy’s leader, Q. (Watkins has denied this.) After the series aired, Hoback says that the series’ executive producer Adam McKay—who directed *The Big Short* and executive-produced

*Succession*—reached back out to Hoback with a suggestion for who he should unmask next.

“Don’t say Satoshi,” Hoback remembers telling him. “It’s the most over-pitched and under-delivered story in the documentary space.”

But Hoback was intrigued by the idea and decided to dive in. (McKay is an executive producer on this project as well.) To start, Hoback reached out to one of the few people that Satoshi actually cites in his original Bitcoin white paper: the British cryptographer Adam Back, a core member of the 1990s movement known as the Cypherpunks. The Cypherpunks were a group of libertarian-leaning technologists who feared the internet would allow governments to strip people of their privacy, and wanted to create technical solutions to preserve individual rights online. In 2002, Back created Hashcash, a system to limit email spam. Its cryptographic structure laid the seeds for Bitcoin’s own framework.

**Read More:** [\*Inside the Health Crisis of a Texas Bitcoin Town.\*](#)

Hoback spent some time with Back, and investigated whether Back himself might be Satoshi, as [others have speculated](#). During one of their meetups in Latvia, Back introduced Hoback to Todd. With his hoodies and unkempt facial hair, Todd practically embodies the visual stereotype of a coder. He [receives grants](#) to conduct research and write code for various parts of the crypto ecosystem, and frequently gives talks at Bitcoin conferences. “If Adam Back introduces you to somebody, you pay attention: He has his reasons,” Hoback says. “I could just tell that there was something strange about their dynamic, which almost had a ‘spy versus spy’ quality to it.”

Todd was an early adopter of Bitcoin. According to Matt Leising’s *Out of the Ether*, he [attended](#) the first Bitcoin meetup in Toronto in 2012, where Vitalik Buterin, the soon-to-be founder of Ethereum,

was also in attendance. As Hoback talked to Todd and researched him, he found small clues pointing his way.

Todd had been interested in creating digital cash from an early age; as a teenager and self-professed “young libertarian” in 2001, he had [emailed Back](#) to ask him how Hashcash’s structure might be applied to a “real currency” with a “decentralized ‘central’ database.” Todd was Canadian; Satoshi used British/Canadian spellings of certain words like “favour” and “neighbour,” but also the American/Canadian spelling of [“realize.”](#) Todd was a self-taught coder who was in graduate school for physics when Bitcoin was created—and when Hoback asked a programmer to assess Bitcoin’s code, they told him that it lacked polish, and was written as if “a physicist became a software engineer.”

Then, Hoback found what he considered a “smoking gun”: a [thread](#) from a Bitcoin forum in 2010, two days before Satoshi stopped posting on the site and largely disappeared from public life. In the thread, Satoshi wrote a few paragraphs proposing a highly technical change to Bitcoin’s code. A few hours later, Peter Todd—who was, at this point, a nobody in the Bitcoin community—responded with what appeared to be a slight correction: “Of course, to be specific, the inputs and outputs can’t match “exactly” if the second transaction has a transaction fee.”

When Hoback reread this post, he came to believe that Todd wasn’t correcting Satoshi, but was Satoshi: he had mistakenly logged into his personal account, Hoback believed, and written a post clarifying his previous message written under the pseudonym. A few years later, Todd would actually write and implement this solution that he had Satoshi were discussing, called “replace-by-fee,” into Bitcoin.

When Hoback confronted Todd and Adam Back on camera about this post and told Todd about his theory that he was Satoshi, Todd denied it, calling it “ludicrous.” He also became visibly nervous,

laughing and muttering under his breath. “His reaction is extremely telling,” Hoback says, “and Adam’s reaction, or his lack of saying anything, is almost as revealing as the evidence compiled up until that point.”

Hoback now says he’s “very, very confident” that Todd is Satoshi. “When I put together a list of why and why not it might be him, the ‘might not be him’ list was very short,” he says. (That list includes the question of why Todd didn’t simply delete his potentially incriminating post.)

**Read More:** *Why Bitcoin Mining Companies Are Pivoting to AI.*

In the documentary, Todd tells Hoback that if he were Bitcoin’s creator, he would have destroyed “the ability to prove that I was Satoshi.” In an email forwarded to TIME, Todd wrote that the quest to find Satoshi was not only “dumb,” but “dangerous,” and said his coding abilities aren’t at the level of Bitcoin’s code base.

Adam Back [wrote on X](#) after the trailer was released that the “documentary will presumably be wrong, as no one knows who Satoshi is.”

## Insiders Cast Doubts Upon Todd

The Bitcoin community as a whole is incentivized to keep Satoshi anonymous: In 2021, Coinbase [included](#) Satoshi’s identification in a list of business risk factors. Many Bitcoiners have [responded with anger](#) to the HBO project’s very existence, arguing that Satoshi’s privacy should be respected and that he could be [charged by governments](#) for violating securities laws or threatening national security if identified.

Over Bitcoin’s 15-year history, similar attempts to unmask Satoshi have been met with fierce backlash. “The hero-founder cult in crypto has caused nothing but problems,” says Austin Campbell,

professor at Columbia Business School and the founder of a crypto consultant company. “The fact that Bitcoin was kind of put out there and then Satoshi vanished is integral to its success.”

Pointing to Todd will likely especially incense many insiders, [some of whom believe Todd](#) has actually hurt Bitcoin’s development. Much of the animosity towards Todd comes from his role in a conflict known as the block size wars, in which Bitcoin enthusiasts split into two camps over how to best scale bitcoin for consumer growth. Todd, along with Adam Back and Back’s company Blockstream, argued against implementing a “hard fork” of Bitcoin that would allow it to process transactions much faster. After a lengthy back and forth, Todd’s side won.

In July, a [thread](#) on a Bitcoin-focused subreddit filled with commenters criticizing Todd. “His organization subverted Bitcoin, preventing it from scaling,” one commenter wrote. “He caused sooooooo much damage to BTC,” another posted, referring to the replace-by-fee function that Todd had “discussed” with Satoshi back in 2010. “I don’t know why anyone gives him the time of day.”

If Todd is in fact Satoshi, as Hoback argues, then his role in the block size wars is significant, because it would show Bitcoin’s founder having an inordinate sway over Bitcoins’ future, despite the fact that it is supposed to be a decentralized, community-driven project. “You say it’s open-source, but Blockstream manipulated the ongoing development so they always had the thumb up the scale in their favor,” says Bryce Weiner, a Bitcoin developer who opposed Todd during the block size wars. Weiner, however, dismisses the idea that Peter Todd could be Satoshi. “He’s just somebody who knew how to engineer and fell into Bitcoin and got lucky,” he says.

**Read More:** [\*The Prince of Crypto Has Concerns.\*](#)

Samson Mow, a former executive of Blockstream who is featured prominently in the documentary, also doubts that Todd could have created Bitcoin. “He’s too contrarian to focus on building something as complex and involved,” he says.

Mike Hearn, one of [Bitcoin’s earliest developers](#), emailed with Satoshi in 2010 and says there are several clues pointing to Satoshi being much older. Satoshi’s coding style, Hearn says, was antiquated for its time: “It suggested he came of age as a developer in the ’90s and then stopped: He did not keep up with the evolution of the industry,” he says. (Todd was 10 in 1995). Satoshi also [referenced](#) an obscure 1979 financial event—the Hunt brothers trying to corner the silver market—“as if he remembered it,” Hearn says.

## Todd’s Social Media Presence

Todd maintains a divisive presence on Twitter, where he takes extreme right-wing views about issues like migrants in America and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. “The Russian people are genocidal terrorists whose goal is to steal what others have. Our goal must be to exterminate them,” he [wrote in July](#). “Kill them and you make the world better.” He’s [written](#) that it would be strategically advantageous for Israel to bomb Lebanon’s hospitals and reposted conspiracy theories about migrants in Springfield, Ohio.

Todd also uses social media and podcasts to criticize some of Satoshi’s ideas, which is rare in a community that usually accepts Satoshi’s ideas as gospel. When talking about Bitcoin fans who love Bitcoin’s hard-coded cap of 21 million coins, Todd said on a [recent podcast](#): “They’ve bought in so hard to the 21 million meme that they just cannot accept that Satoshi might have screwed that one up.” In another Tweet, he [contended](#): “The sigops mistake is evidence that Satoshi worked alone, and was in a rush.”

And in 2015, Todd [wrote](#): “I think Bitcoin is a great example of how sometimes world-changing ideas are actually pretty simple and don’t require you to be a world-class expert to come up with them, just someone with an open mind, a flash of brilliance, and a supportive community to fix the flaws and bring the idea to fruition.”

Hoback sees this as evidence in support of his theory. “His fixation on whether or not Satoshi got stuff right or wrong is telling,” Hoback says. “Think back on who you were 15 years ago—maybe you got some things wrong. But then people are like, ‘No, it’s the word of God, and we have to take it as gospel’: That would be pretty annoying.”

While the evidence he presents is circumstantial, Hoback hopes the documentary will spur deeper investigations into a question that has bedeviled the crypto community for a decade and a half. “This conclusion is unexpected and it’s not who many people in the Bitcoin community want it to be,” Hoback says. “But maybe once they see the film and absorb the evidence, and then want to get closer to the answer, they’ll look into this as well.”

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## Exclusive: Hogan Approved Millions for Stepmother's Property Development as Governor

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



On January 27, 2021, then Gov. Larry Hogan [announced](#) some good news for affordable housing in Maryland: nearly \$40 million in competitive awards to spur construction of 18 low-income housing projects. “During our administration,” Hogan said, “The State of Maryland has provided financing and tax credits to create or preserve more than 20,000 affordable rental units across the state —an unprecedented level of production.” But there was one detail Hogan didn’t mention: one of the projects was being developed on his own family’s property.

The bucolic land in Frederick County, roughly 50 miles north of Washington, D.C., had been in the Hogan family since the governor’s father, former Congressman Larry Hogan, Sr., and his second wife, Ilona Hogan, bought it in 1983 for \$230,000. Now, three years after Hogan Sr. had passed away and six years into his

son's tenure as governor, Hogan's stepmother was converting the ten-acre property into an income-restricted housing facility. Ilona Hogan had transferred the property into a limited liability company (LLC) she owned, according to land records reviewed by TIME. Osprey Development, a listed client of Hogan's real estate brokerage firm, HOGAN, had been engaged to helm the project. The \$15 million in low-income housing tax credits over ten years and \$1,035,000 in state funds that Hogan announced that day made Crestwood Manor, as the 60-unit affordable housing complex would become known, a reality. It also paved the way for the ultimate sale of the property. In November 2022, Ilona Hogan sold it to Osprey for \$3.75 million.

The Crestwood Manor project is the latest example of a potential conflict of interest between Hogan's authority over Maryland housing dollars as governor and his family's real estate businesses. Maryland law says that officials cannot knowingly participate in decisions in which they or a close relative have an interest.

"Approving transactions which benefit you personally or your family or your affiliated interests is, I would say, at a minimum, unethical," says Warren Deschenaux, former director of Maryland's nonpartisan Department of Legislative Services. "The governor is responsible for what happens under him."

TIME tried to contact Ilona Hogan for comment through Manchester Partners LLC, HOGAN, and former Governor Hogan, but she couldn't be reached. Responding to questions from TIME, a Hogan spokesman, Michael Ricci, says the former governor had nothing to do with selecting the Crestwood Manor project.

"Governor Hogan and his office played no role in the evaluation or selection process for these merit-based awards," Ricci says. "All decisions are made by agency officials on a competitive basis as part of a rigorous application process held by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These safeguards prevent any personal or political considerations from entering the process."

Three Hogan Administration officials tell TIME that Hogan and his deputies reviewed and approved all awards. One attended the late 2020 meeting with the governor and his staff regarding the slate of awards that included Crestwood Manor, weeks before the official announcement in January 2021. “The governor and his office announced the awardees after review and approval,” says the official, who was granted anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly on state business. Ricci did not respond to questions asking whether Hogan knew the awards were benefiting his stepmother or whether Hogan himself profited from the development at any stage.

TIME [reported](#) on Oct. 10 that nearly 40% of all the state’s competitive affordable housing awards that Hogan approved as governor went to listed clients of his real estate firm, in which he maintained principal ownership interest after handing day-to-day control to his half-brother Timothy. As one of three members of the Board of Public Works, an administrative body that determines how Maryland taxpayer money gets spent, Hogan voted on five occasions to issue additional loans or grants to four of those same developers, according to public records. Osprey was among them. On February 22, 2017, he voted in favor of a grant easement for improvements to a site it owned and operated, according to public documents reviewed by TIME.

Hogan is currently locked in a high-stakes U.S. Senate race against Prince George’s County Executive Angela Alsobrooks. Since the first story was published, Maryland Democrats have vowed to enact tighter ethics laws and, echoing government ethics experts, have [called](#) for an investigation into Hogan’s handling of housing issues while in office. “This is a shocking ethical lapse on the part of an individual who was in the most powerful position in a state,” says Walter Shaub, former director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics.

**Hogan Sr. bought the Frederick property in the 1980s** after he retired from politics. He had made history as the first Republican on the House Judiciary Committee to announce his support for articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon in 1974. After an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate in 1982, Hogan Sr. moved to the spacious colonial with columns on the front porch, nestled in the woods a stone's throw from the I-270 highway that runs from the Capital Beltway outside Washington D.C. to Frederick. He and his second wife, Ilona, also based their law practice there.

On June 10, 2016, Hogan Sr. transferred full ownership of the property to Ilona, public records show. She signed it over that same day to Manchester Partners LLC for \$0 and received a special tax exemption on the transfer only available when the seller is the sole shareholder of the entity acquiring the property. Manchester Partners LLC shares the same address as HOGAN, the brokerage firm principally owned by Larry Hogan and run by his half-brother Timothy, the son of Ilona and Larry Hogan, Sr. An Osprey executive who worked on the project, Brian Lopez, confirmed the LLC belonged to Ilona.

A year later, in November 2017, then Gov. Hogan [announced](#) the beginning of construction on a \$65.5 million project to rebuild a highway interchange where Route 85 crosses I-270, within earshot of his father's house. Hogan had earmarked that money his first year in office, after canceling a \$2.9 billion light rail in Baltimore and diverting those funds to highway, road, and bridge projects. “This interchange project is critical for Frederick County residents, motorists, and business owners who spend too much time in traffic every day,” Hogan said in a press release at the time. (In 2020, Hogan was the subject of [multiple ethics complaints](#) for advancing transportation infrastructure projects near properties his real estate firm owned.)

Lopez, who also served as Gov. Hogan’s chair of the Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission, told TIME that Osprey became the

controlling entity of the Crestwood Manor property in 2020 to flip the Hogan family home into an affordable housing site. Osprey, which had been a listed client of HOGAN since 2011, applied for competitive affordable housing awards for the project through DHCD's fall 2020 application round. Those applications go through a competitive points-based scoring process and are reviewed by an internal committee inside the agency. The Housing Secretary then takes the recommendations to the governor.

Multiple officials who worked in his Administration described Hogan's involvement in the process. DHCD officials would send memos to the governor and his staff outlining the applications and proposed awardees, the officials say. Hogan would periodically receive updates from senior staff. Two of the officials confirmed that Hogan oversaw the fall 2020 award round that included Crestwood Manor. One says they attended a meeting with the governor and his staff in late 2020 regarding the final decisions and planned announcement.

Hogan announced those awards to great fanfare in January 2021, [saying](#) the slate broke the record for most rental units financed in a funding round in Maryland history. Seven of the 18 developers whose projects he greenlit, including Osprey, were HOGAN's listed clients. The Crestwood Manor project met all the criteria for selection, according to the DHCD official, and there is no evidence of wrongdoing by Osprey or Ilona Hogan. It is not clear whether HOGAN played any role in the development or other transactions around the Crestwood Manor property.

Neither Governor Hogan nor Timothy Hogan responded to multiple emails asking whether HOGAN brokered the sale of Ilona Hogan's home to Osprey. The details of the award that preceded the \$3.75 million sale of his stepmother's property are raising new concerns about conflicts of interest during his time in office. Says Shaub, the former director of the U.S. Government Ethics office: "Anyone serving in a position as powerful as governor and running for the

position of Senate owes the public a very specific explanation as to why the facts are different than they appear to be.”

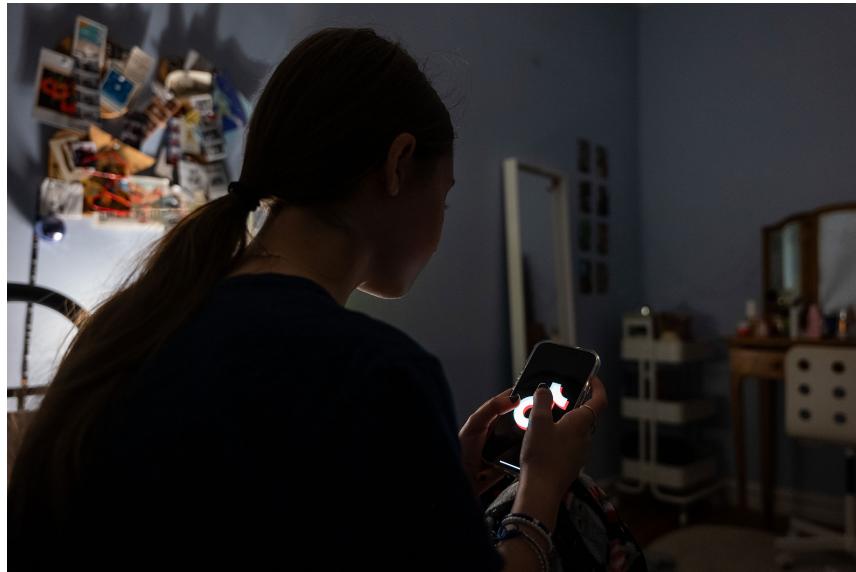
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## The Thing That's Missing From Our Conversations About Kids and Phones

Kennedy is a clinical psychologist, and CEO and founder of parenting company Good Inside



We've all seen the data around phones, social media, and the youth mental health crisis and we know: this generation of children has staggering rates of anxiety and depression. I'm as concerned as anyone, and yet, I've been shocked that one key word—really, a key foundational principle in life—has been left out of the conversation: boundaries.

As a clinical psychologist specializing in parenting and family relationships, I have noticed a trend of swapping out important boundaries with keeping kids happy. Here's the thing: kids have always pushed limits and asked for things that aren't good for them; in fact, this is part of a kid doing their job, as they're meant to explore the world and figure out the "edges" or limits. And while kids continue to do their job, parents are really struggling to do theirs—and as a result, the family system is off-balance and mental health is suffering.

The cost of not being able to set boundaries with kids has never been higher. Decades ago, if parents struggled to hold boundaries and tolerate pushback, a child may have had an extra cupcake or stayed out too late. Today the cost of not being able to set boundaries looks more like freely scrolling TikTok at age 8 or playing endless hours of video games at the expense of participating in the real world. I agree that we are facing a crisis—but I don't see only a crisis of phones and social media. I also see a crisis of what I call “Sturdy Leadership” at a time when our kids need it more than ever.

What do I mean by Sturdy Leadership? Sturdy Leadership is a model of parental authority where parents both hold boundaries and stay connected to a child or, actually, improve connection through these moments. They do this by validating their child's feelings while holding firm on what is best for everyone. This is the same model that's effective in the workplace or on a sports team—a leader who can stay true to their principles and who cares about other people's feelings without being taken over by them.

So what does this look like in practice? Imagine your 5 year old wants you to buy a toy at a toy store—even though you explicitly said you were only going in to buy a birthday present for a cousin. Your 5 year old starts begging for a toy and you feel a tantrum coming on. Sturdy Leadership, in response, would look like: “I get it. It's hard to see so many fun toys and not get something. Today I'm only buying a toy for your cousin. I can take a picture of what you want so we can remember it later. I love you, we'll get through this.”

You can think of it like a math equation: Validation of feelings + holding boundaries = Sturdy Leadership.

What about an example with an older child? Imagine you just told your 12-year-old daughter “no” when she asked to have a sleepover, and she is—understandably—annoyed with you about

not getting what she wants. In this moment, Sturdy Leadership could look something like this: “One of my main jobs is to make decisions that I think are good for you, even when you’re upset with me. This is one of those times. I get that you’re upset, I really do.” In this example the parent validated their child’s feelings while holding firm on their decision to do what they believe is best.

Here’s why boundary setting—early and often—is so important: When the day comes that our kids ask for a phone or for Instagram, our approach will not be isolated to some universally recognized “media policy” we have as parents; our approach will simply be an extension of the way we’ve always interacted with our kids around their wants and requests.

***Read More: [How Dr. Becky Became the Millennial Parenting Whisperer](#)***

As much as I’m a fan of boundaries, I’m an even bigger fan of this idea: It’s never too late, the right time to change is always right now. So if you’re a parent who already gave your kids a phone or access to social media and you wish you had held back, all is not lost. Think about yourself like a pilot who always has the right to return to base should the skies be more turbulent than expected—in fact, this is something passengers would want a pilot to do, even if they seem annoyed in the moment. You are the pilot of your family plane—and while your kid will never thank you outright for changing your rules, they will, years later, very much benefit from your sturdiness and acts of protection.

The key is to start with small steps. For example, this could be a conversation with your kid that looks something like this: “I’ve been doing a lot of reading on phones, social media and your health. I am responsible for your well-being and safety. I know it will not be easy, but beginning tonight, we’re all going to keep our phones outside our bedrooms when we turn in for the night.” In this example, the parent is embodying their authority with boundaries

and warmth, and this new rule is from a place of protection, not punishment.

My life's work has been to help parents become confident, Sturdy Leaders so they can raise confident, sturdy kids. We know that phones and social media are impeding our kids' ability to flourish, but parents need more support. We need to expand the conversation so that rather than feeling locked in fear, parents know the practical skills they can build to bring change and support their kids.

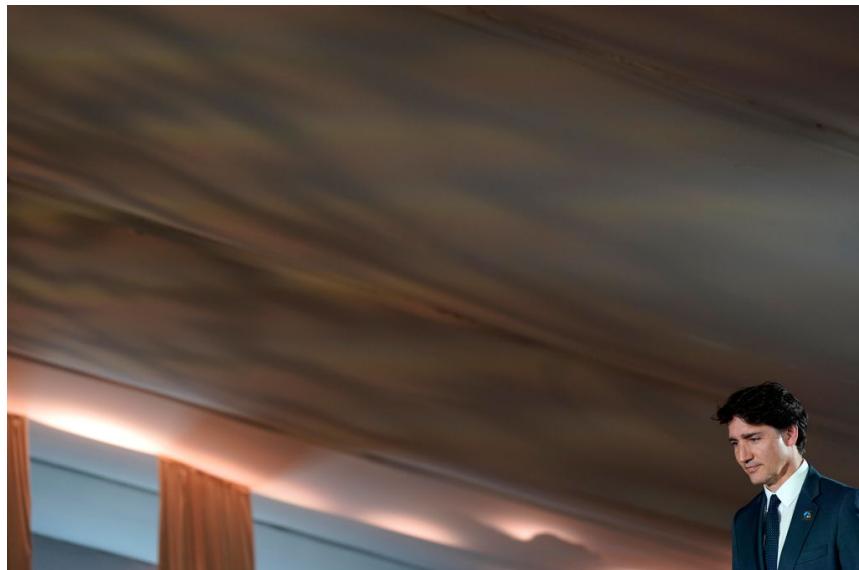
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## How Canada Soured on Justin Trudeau

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



In elections earlier this year, incumbent leaders and parties in [India](#), [South Africa](#), [France](#), and [Britain](#) took a beating. America's President and Japan's Prime Minister were [pushed to step aside](#) before their parties face voters. Germany's Chancellor is [lucky](#) his country won't hold national elections until next year. Voters everywhere, it seems, want change. Now it's [Justin Trudeau's](#) turn to face the music.

Canada's Liberal Party-led government and its increasingly unpopular Prime Minister face a growing risk of early elections they appear all but certain to lose. After winning power with a majority of [parliamentary seats](#) in 2015, elections in 2019 left

Trudeau's Liberals [with a minority government](#) which they retained following a snap election in 2021. Then, on Sept. 16 of this year, the Liberals hit an iceberg when they [lost a safe seat](#) in Montreal, LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, in a by-election. With apologies to Frank Sinatra, if Trudeau's Liberals can't make it there, they can't make it anywhere. The winner instead: the Bloc Québécois.

Pollster Angus Reid found in September that [nearly two-thirds](#) of respondents nationwide disapproved of Trudeau's performance as PM. The latest polls show that Canada's Conservative Party, now led by Pierre Poilievre, could win nearly four times as many seats as the Liberals. Voters favor the Conservatives on jobs, the cost-of-living crisis, taxes, immigration, and crime.

Some Liberal MPs have [called on Trudeau to quit](#) his post as PM and party leader in favor of a fresh face ahead of the next elections, but polling offers no indication that a Liberal Party replacement would fare much better.

Though the direction of polling appears clear, the timing of the next vote remains uncertain. Federal elections are currently scheduled for October 2025, but Trudeau's Liberals lead a minority government in a hung Parliament, and opposition parties could join forces to compel an early vote at any time. The current government could be defeated in a no-confidence vote that would set up a potential campaign as soon as November. Even if Trudeau survives another challenge—his government has already [survived two no-confidence motions](#) in recent weeks—the need to pass a federal budget in April makes a spring election likely.

Which brings us back to the Bloc Québécois, a separatist francophone party with much to say about when the next election is held. The party's leader, Yves-François Blanchet, has [threatened to withdraw support](#) from Trudeau's government unless the Prime Minister agrees to back a bill that would raise pensions and exempt some farming sectors from future trade negotiations. Blanchet has

warned that if his demands aren't met, the bloc will open talks with the Conservatives and the New Democratic Party, which sits to the left of the Liberals, to collapse Trudeau's government.

It's even **possible** the Bloc Québécois will win more seats than the Liberals in the next election, raising the prospect of Blanchet as Leader of the Official Opposition. If so, the 2026 election in Quebec could become the testing ground for a **third independence referendum** for the mainly French-speaking province. If Quebec voters are frustrated with Trudeau, they have no great love for Poilievre. Rule by Conservatives, which will rely heavily on votes in Ontario and western provinces, might also leave Quebecers feeling underrepresented in government.

For now, the question is whether Liberal MPs can persuade Trudeau to stand down and how soon other parties can force an election. A bad year for incumbents worldwide may soon get worse. But the bigger story for Canada may be the **resurgent Quebec nationalists** who want one more shot at a country of their own.

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## What Vaccine Side Effects Really Mean

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



Vaccine side effects like soreness, fever, and fatigue scare some people out of [getting their shots](#). Ask a doctor, though, and they'll tell you these unpleasant symptoms have a silver lining: they're a signal that your immune system is firing up in response to the shot, doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

"If you feel bad after the vaccine, at least feel good about feeling bad," says Dr. Kevin Dieckhaus, chief of infectious diseases at UConn Health and co-author of a [2023 study](#) on COVID-19 vaccine side effects.

But is it a bad sign if you *don't* get side effects after a shot? Does a pain-free next day mean the vaccine didn't work?

Probably not. Here's why.

## Why do vaccines cause side effects?

Vaccines work by mimicking an infection. They introduce your body to a weakened or broken-down form of a particular pathogen so it can practice defending itself against the real thing. This involves creating antibodies, proteins that attack foreign invaders.

When the immune system fires up in response to the shot, it results in inflammation that can leave you feeling lousy the next day. [A flu shot](#) won't give you the flu—you're not actually getting infected—but you may temporarily experience some of the same symptoms.

However, side effects vary. Some shots produce more than others. And even two people who get the exact same vaccine may have [totally different reactions](#), for a range of reasons including age, sex, health and immunization history, and other factors that scientists don't fully understand. "The human body is an amazingly varied machine," Dieckhaus says.

## Do stronger side effects mean stronger immune protection?

Multiple [studies on COVID-19 shots](#) have found at least a modest link between the number and severity of side effects someone experiences after vaccination and the strength or durability of their immune response. [A 2022 study](#) pointed to a similar effect for flu shots.

**Read More:** [\*9 Things You Should Do for Your Brain Health Every Day, According to Neurologists\*](#)

But [not all studies](#) have reached that conclusion. “The literature is pretty mixed,” says Florian Krammer, a professor of vaccinology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. “It’s highly variable.”

Even [some studies](#) that have found a correlation have concluded that, when it comes to protection, the difference between people who get side effects and those who don’t is so minimal as to barely matter, Krammer adds.

## **So is it bad not to get side effects after a shot?**

Don’t worry if you feel fine the day after an immunization. While side effects can be a sign of the immune system working, they are not necessary, Krammer says. In fact, vaccine developers usually strive to create a product that works as well as possible while triggering as few side effects as possible.

Almost “everybody gets an immune response” after being vaccinated, Dieckhaus agrees. “If you have symptoms, we just know that your immune response is probably a little bit more robust.” Side effects may be the cherry on top of the sundae, but you still have the sundae no matter what.

In the [original clinical trials](#) for Pfizer-BioNTech’s COVID-19 vaccine, for example, less than half of study participants reported side effects, but the shot worked well for the vast majority of people. People who don’t respond well to vaccines typically have a medical reason, such as taking an immune-suppressing drug. “If you’re a somewhat healthy adult and you don’t have side effects, good,” Krammer says.

### **Read More: [Why Vinegar Is So Good for You](#)**

Plus, trends reported in studies don’t always translate to individual experiences, says Dr. Ethan Dutcher, a postdoctoral scholar at the

University of California, San Francisco, and co-author of a recent [study](#) on the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines. Overall, his team found that people who experienced lots of side effects after their initial COVID-19 vaccines tended to mount stronger antibody responses. But as with any trend, there were plenty of exceptions. “We had a lot of people who didn’t experience tiredness who had higher antibody levels than people who did experience tiredness,” Dutcher says.

And, Dieckhaus says, the immune system is complex. His team’s study, which also found an association between side effects and durability of immune response, measured only one aspect of it: how long it took antibodies to wane after COVID-19 shots. But that’s “just one piece of the puzzle,” he says. There are lots of other variables that influence whether someone gets infected and how sick they’ll be if they do.

The bottom line: make sure you get your vaccines, and don’t worry too much about how you feel afterward. If you have side effects, “you can feel your immune system working,” Krammer says. “But if you don’t feel that, that’s fine too. It’s probably still working.”

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<https://time.com/7094419>

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## Nebraska Senate May Be the Race No One Saw Coming

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



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

The last time Nebraskans voted for a Senator who wasn't a Republican, George W. Bush was an [unpopular](#) President leading a deeply [divisive](#) GOP. Which is why it's so curious that Republicans are suddenly rushing to make sure Republican Sen. Deb Fischer keeps the seat for a third term and Democrats are holding tepid optimism that the deep-red state might be at least open to backing a union boss who is running as an independent.

National Republicans have [booked](#) roughly a half-million dollars in advertising time in this last month of campaigning. An outside group with ties to one of the state's richest families is [adding](#)

another \$2 million to that kitty to [boost](#) Fischer's late-emerging nail-biter against neophyte Dan Osborn. Meanwhile, national Democrats are publicly denying any involvement but are privately flagging polls—albeit limited in number—suggesting Nebraska may be closer than any state with a 2-to-1 Republican voter registration advantage should be. Late last month, the most respected political handicapper in the game [moved](#) its rating for the race from a GOP gimme to a click closer to the middle. And a New York *Times*/Siena College poll of three other Senate races drawing the eyes of Democrats [released](#) on Thursday [suggests](#) Nebraska might be the last vestige of hope for the party to hold any sway over the Senate.

Put plainly on the Plains: Nebraska's Senate race stands to become this cycle's out-of-nowhere shocker that neither side saw coming.

"This was not on my BINGO card," says one Democratic strategist working on other Senate races.

A Republican strategist who is a veteran of the Senate game adds, "If Deb Fischer is in trouble, then [Senators] Sherrod Brown, Jon Tester, and Bob Casey are toast in an anti-incumbent year."

Democrats, who have an unbelievably difficult Senate map to defend this year, know the drill in Nebraska. [Ben Nelson](#) was the most recent Democrat to win a Senate race in the state, but that was in 2006. Other Democrats like [Bob Kerrey](#), [Jim Exon](#), and [Edward Zorinsky](#) previously were sent by Nebraskans to represent them in the Senate, but their kind are decidedly from a different era. Democrats this year didn't even bother with a nominee and instead assumed their efforts were better spent defending incumbents in places like Ohio, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Nevada.

Nebraska, for good reason, was not atop the places where strategists in both parties spent much time. Democrats expected Fischer to run away with the race like she did in 2018 by 19 points.

President Donald Trump carried the state by the same margin two years later. It was, frankly, a bad investment for Democrats. In fact, unseating incumbent Republicans in GOP-favoring [Florida](#) and [Texas](#) seemed like better targets than anything in the vast sea of Republican voters that stretches across the center of the nation.

And yet, with less than a month before Election Day, the GOP cavalry is heading to Omaha airwaves to protect Fischer, a keep-your-head-down lawmaker with plum assignments on the Armed Services and Appropriations committees. A cattle rancher in her life before politics, Fischer often steps out of the spotlight to focus on local issues dear to her constituents like agriculture subsidies and rural Internet access. Mainstream to her core, no Republicans credibly put her race in trouble. This is why [panic](#) has seeped into the GOP bloodstream so late, with control of the Upper Chamber in the balance. A competitive race in Nebraska was nowhere near a reality six months ago.

For his part, Osborn has done his level best to keep national Democrats at an arm's length. He has vowed he would not caucus with either party, a break from the four [independent](#) lawmakers who are currently in the chamber and join Senate Democrats for organizing purposes. Osborn, who [led](#) a union strike in Omaha against Kellogg in 2021, has rejected links to national liberal figures like Bernie Sanders or Chuck Schumer, and neither is exactly trying to link Osborn's fortunes to their individual brands.

“People are just thirsty for a change, on both sides of the aisle,” Osborn [told](#) *The Washington Post*. Fischer, meanwhile, has [labeled](#) her independent opponent a “Trojan horse” for Democrats.

The race’s surprise competitiveness is the product of a confluence of events, and more than \$4 million in liberal dark-money ads. Part of the draw is the fact that Nebraska is one of just two states where the statewide winner in the presidential race doesn’t automatically grab all of the state’s Electoral College votes. Nebraska and Maine

are the only two states to apportion some electoral votes by congressional district. That fact has made Nebraska's second district a plum target for national Democrats, and there's been a surge of action in that Omaha-area edge of the state. So intense is the interest, a Midwest printing shop is even selling [shirts](#) advertising Omaha as the region's "Blue Dot." (Both Joe Biden and Barack Obama carried that district.)

So as this campaign heads into a final sprint between a cattle rancher and union organizer, both parties are left with a late-breaking worry about a Plains state race that no one expected. Other campaigns, too, are watching with more than a little trepidation: if a latent anti-incumbent seed is blooming so late in Nebraska, where else might shockingly tight contests emerge?

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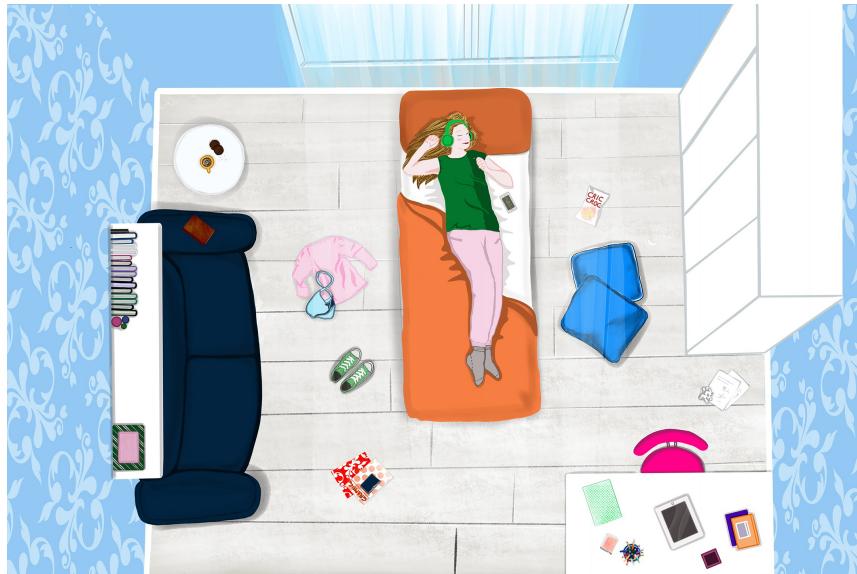
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## The Beauty of Being Alone

Keane is the supervising editor of NPR's Life Kit and author of the book *Party of One: Be Your Own Best Life Partner*.



There's a lot of fear around spending time alone. Alone time can make people itchy with boredom. It can carry a stigma (especially if you're single). Worse, recent articles and studies warn us about the dangers of loneliness—one 2017 study by Julianne Holt-Lunstad at BYU's Social Connection & Health Lab claims claims loneliness is as bad as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy published an advisory all about the [epidemic of loneliness in America](#). It details the genuine risks of chronic loneliness, such as increased risks of anxiety and depression, as well as dementia in older adults.

The message? Loneliness isn't just bad for you; it's a killer.

But while it is a serious health problem, what gets lost in these conversations is that not all alone time is the same. There's chronic loneliness—and there's solitude. One is a dangerous epidemic. The other is a skill we must nurture.

What is chronic loneliness? It occurs when there is unhappiness about a lack of companionship or a perceived sense of social isolation. Being physically alone isn't the only way to feel lonely. A person can feel lonely while a partner is disrespecting them. Or being surrounded by a group of people where they feel like an outsider.

Yet not all loneliness is a health issue. As the Surgeon General advisory notes, the “transient feelings of loneliness may be less problematic, or even adaptative [than chronic loneliness].”

That's a helpful distinction.

Being alone is when you happen to be by yourself. We do so many activities alone that don't come with the stigmas or dangers of chronic loneliness—reading a book, doing an art project, cooking a meal, or running errands. This kind of alone time is healing and important. Solitude is a neutral-to-positive state of being free of the demands of others. While chronic loneliness threatens our health, solitude can be the opposite. Even just 15 minutes of solitude can help you regulate your emotions. Solitude also provides the space for creative thinking to happen. Finding time for solitude can help you gain deeper self-knowledge.

### ***Read More:*** [\*5 Times When Being Alone Will Improve Your Life\*](#)

Yet we don't know how to embrace it, and we often run from it. We stay in bad relationships so to not be alone. We surround ourselves with friends and go to parties when our energy is depleted. We have trouble sitting still with ourselves. We don't see a path from bad loneliness to good loneliness.

This isn't surprising. One of the main factors of chronic loneliness—the kind with serious health implications—is social isolation. According to the late professor and researcher [John Cacioppo](#) of the University of Chicago, loneliness is a biological signal akin to

hunger or thirst. When we are in a state of painful loneliness, it is our bodies giving us information to find social support or do reparative work on our social ties.

Yet being more in touch with our loneliness sensors help us use the healthy version of alone time. You wouldn't be ashamed of needing water when thirsty, so why should you feel bad about feeling lonely? What's more, we might have more control over how connected we feel with others than we think. Yale psychologist and research scientist Emma Seppälä's found that "[a sense of connection is internal](#)." Meaning, if you can feel connected with loved ones even when you're not around them, you can still feel socially connected. Seppälä's work has found people can boost this internal sense of connection by volunteering, taking care of yourself, and reaching out for help when you do feel lonely.

I am a believer in finding your best solitude style. For instance, I love going to a movie alone and have never felt uncomfortable doing it. You're in a dark room facing a screen, not talking with people. In my opinion, it is the perfect solo activity for any time. However, according to research by Rebecca Ratner, a marketing professor at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business, people often avoid activities they enjoy if they have to do them alone, mainly if they are observed doing them in public.

Ratner also found that people tend to underestimate how much they will enjoy a solo activity. I encourage those of you who don't like being alone in public, or are even uncomfortable doing it in private, to try it out once. You may just find yourself seeking it out again and again. Dining out alone can inspire its own romanticism. Bringing a book to a coffee shop is a gift. Taking a solo hike in the woods allows you to observe things more closely than you'd ever done when hiking with a companion.

I now actively create solitude projects. During the pandemic, I missed going to the movies. Unable to go to my favorite local

theater, I couldn't recreate that experience, so I made up a little challenge to watch as many movie trilogies as possible. I dove into the Richard Linklater Before films, the Back to the Future trilogy, the Matrix movies, and more. This self-assigned project got me caught up on movies that had been on my to-watch list, but it also helped solve the question of "what the hell am I going to do with all this alone time?"

Staying committed to a creative project is a beautiful solitude style. So are activities that make you feel connected with others—like writing letters to a loved one or even practicing a lovingkindness meditation.

Solitude is like any other social interaction. Sometimes brunch out with friends is all laughs and the energy is just right. But other times someone complains a little too much about their job or their ex and the vibe is off.

But when you carve out delicious moments for just you—taking yourself shopping, hiking, roller-skating, whatever it is—you get to be the sole architect of your experience. There can be a certain air of romance to the time you give yourself.

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<https://time.com/7064919>

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## Animals' Understanding of Death Can Teach Us About Our Own

Monsó is associate professor of philosophy in the Department of Logic, History, and Philosophy of Science at the National Distance Education University (UNED) in Madrid



In 2018, field researchers in Uganda came across [an unusual sight](#): a female chimpanzee carried an infant that she had recently given birth to, and which was affected by albinism, an extremely uncommon condition in this species that gives their fur a striking white color. Chimpanzee mothers often remove themselves from the group to give birth, which protects their babies from the infanticides that are sadly frequent in this species. The researchers seemed to have caught this mother on her return to the group. Sure enough, they were soon able to document the reactions of her mates when they first encountered the infant and his distinctive look.

The behaviors they saw were far removed from the curiosity and care that newborns tend to elicit: instead, the chimpanzees reacted with what looked like extreme fear, with their fur on end and

emitting the kinds of calls that signal potentially dangerous animals, such as snakes or unknown humans. Shortly after, violence ensued, and the alpha male together with a few of his allies killed and dismembered the little one. Upon his death, the behavior of the chimpanzees radically changed, and the apes, overtaken by curiosity, began to investigate the corpse: sniffing it, poking it, tugging at its fur and comparing it to their own, entranced by this being who smelled like a chimp but looked so different.

This tragic story is one of the best pieces of evidence we have that chimpanzees can understand death. The key here lies in their shift in attitude upon the baby's demise. What at first was perceived as a threat suddenly transformed into a fascinating object worthy of the most thorough investigation, so harmless as to allow for tactile and olfactory inspection. It was as though the chimps had processed that that unusual animal could no longer hurt them.

But this is precisely what understanding death essentially means: grasping that a dead individual can no longer do what they could when they were alive.

Some scientists who study animals' relation to death might disagree with this conclusion. Understanding death, they might argue, implies comprehending the absolute finality of it, its inevitability, its unpredictability, and the fact that it will affect everyone, including oneself. These scientists would be in the grip of what I have termed [intellectual anthropocentrism](#): the assumption that the only way of understanding death is the human way, that animals either have a concept of death equivalent to the average adult human's—or none at all.

### ***Read More: [What If Animals Have Nightmares Too?](#)***

But that couldn't be farther from the truth. Intellectual anthropocentrism is a bias that affects comparative thanatology, the

study of how animals deal with and understand death. The way to extirpate this bias is by realizing that the concept of death is not an all-or-nothing matter, but rather a spectrum—something that comes in degrees. So when we study whether animals can understand death, we should not start from the hypercomplex human concept, but rather from what I call the [minimal concept of death](#).

Understanding death in minimal terms means grasping that dead individuals don't do the sorts of things that living beings of their kind typically do, and that this is an irreversible state. And this is precisely what the chimpanzees' behavior suggests that they had understood.

There is another bias that also affects comparative thanatology: what I have termed [emotional anthropocentrism](#). This is the idea that animals' reactions to death are only worthy of our attention when they appear human-like. Afflicted by this bias, comparative thanatologists have been looking for manifestations of grief in animals, exemplified by the story of [Tahlequah](#), the orca who carried her dead baby for 17 days and over 1000 miles, or [Segasira](#), the gorilla who attempted to suckle from his dead mother's breast despite already having been weaned. Don't get me wrong: [animal grief](#) is a real and an important phenomenon that we should absolutely be paying attention to. However, if we're only looking for mourning behavior in animals, we may be missing most of the picture.

Think back to the chimps. They clearly weren't mourning the albino baby's death. Instead, their behavior seemed dominated by an attitude of curiosity. But this did not detract from their understanding of what had happened. Grief does not signal a special or deep understanding of death. What it signals instead is the existence of a strong social bond between the mourner and the deceased.

But there are many ways of emotionally reacting to the realization that someone died that don't involve grieving. You might react with

joy, if, for instance, it means you're inheriting a large sum of money. You might instead react with anger, if the deceased owed you money that you're now never going to get back. You might react with excitement or hunger, if, say, your flight crashed in the Andes and there was no more food around. Or you might be totally indifferent, if you didn't know the person or they meant nothing to you. Of course, all of these reactions are taboo in our societies, and we wouldn't publicly admit to having them. But this doesn't mean that they're not possible. And crucially: they wouldn't mean that you haven't properly understood what happened. The polar bear who finally manages to catch a seal might understand death just as well as the heartbroken monkey mother who hangs on to her baby's corpse, even though the former thinks of it as a gain rather than a loss.

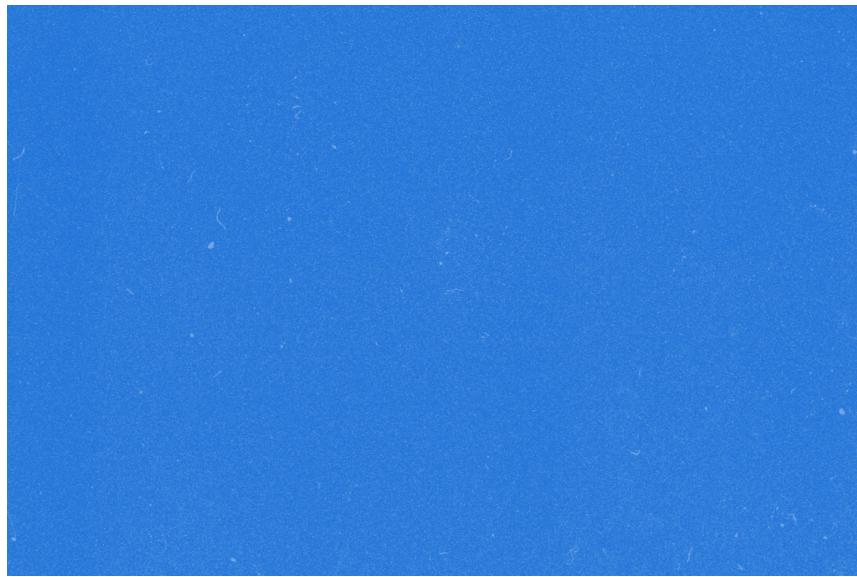
The biases of emotional anthropocentrism and intellectual anthropocentrism have prevented us from seeing that there are many more ways of reacting to death than what is considered politically correct in our societies. In fact, the concept of death, instead of being a complex intellectual achievement within the sole reach of the most cognitively sophisticated species, is actually quite easy to acquire and linked to abilities that are crucial for survival. If we manage to extirpate these two biases, we will see that the concept of death, far from being a uniquely human trait, is widespread in the animal kingdom and more diverse than we will ever know.

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<https://time.com/7093845>

# Everything You Need to Know About Voting in the 2024 Election

Rebecca Schneid is a general assignment reporter for TIME covering U.S. and global news.



The [2024 U.S. general election](#) will give voters the chance to decide on not just the next President, but also members of Congress, ballot measures, state representatives, governors, and more.

Some states' voter registration deadlines have already passed, and others are fast approaching. While Election Day is Nov. 5, some early voting has already started. Early voting started in Georgia on Oct. 15, and more than 328,000 ballots were cast that day—a record number, according to [Gabriel Sterling](#), the chief operating officer for the Georgia Secretary of State's office.

Some states have enacted laws that could make voting more difficult in the 2024 election, according to the [Brennan Center for Justice](#). To help you navigate the process, TIME's staff has

answered some common questions about voting—from [how to vote early](#) to when the polls close in your state.

Here's everything you need to know to cast your vote in 2024.

## Who can register to vote?

Generally speaking, you can vote if you are: a U.S. citizen, a resident of your state, 18 years old as of Election Day, and registered to vote on or before your state's voter registration deadline, according to [USA Gov](#).

People who aren't U.S. citizens can't vote in federal, state, and most local elections. Some people who have been convicted of a felony or who are currently incarcerated can't vote, although these rules vary by state (you can read [this guide](#) from the U.S. Department of Justice to find out what the laws are in your state). Some people who have what USA Gov defines as a “mental disability” might not be able to vote depending on the rules in their state (find out more about that [here](#)). If you're a U.S. citizen living in a U.S. territory, you can't vote for the President in the general election, according to USA Gov. — *Chantelle Lee*

## How can I check my voter registration status?

You can check if you're registered to vote by going to the National Association of Secretaries of State's website [here](#). After you choose your state in the dropdown menu, you'll be sent to the state's election website. Most states ask you for information like your name, date of birth, and driver's license number in order to check if your voter registration is active.

If you're not already registered to vote, you may be able to register online, in person, or by requesting a form to be sent to your election board office, depending on your state. — *C.L.*

## **When is the deadline to register to vote?**

The deadline to register to vote varies by state. Check the U.S. Vote Foundation's website [here](#) to find your state's deadline. — C.L.

## **What documents do I need to register to vote?**

For most people, a valid driver's license or state I.D. will be all you need in order to register to vote. If you don't have either of these, you may still be able to register by using other types of documentation, like utility bills or bank statements. The exact documents required vary by state. You can check what types of documents your state requires [here](#). — *Anna Gordon*

## **How do I vote early—and what are the benefits of early voting?**

People who want to avoid long lines or who might not have time to go to their polling location on Election Day can take advantage of early voting.

The process for early voting differs depending on your state. Some states have already opened early voting, including South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, Idaho, Louisiana, and New Jersey. You can check when early voting starts and the rules in your state [here](#).

Read more about early voting [here](#). — C.L.

## **What's the difference between absentee voting and vote-by-mail?**

Absentee voting and vote-by-mail both allow voters who cannot cast their ballots in person to do so by sending in a ballot via the postal service. The primary difference between the two are the eligibility requirements.

In states where vote-by-mail exists, all registered voters are automatically delivered a vote-by-mail ballot to their registered address. Eight states—California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Washington—conduct elections this way.

In states without vote-by-mail programs, individuals who cannot be physically present on Election Day must request absentee ballots ahead of time. There are often deadlines and rules that voters must meet in order to participate in the program, and some states may require individuals to have an excuse in order to be eligible for an absentee ballot. — A.G.

## **How do I request an absentee ballot?**

If you live in the U.S., you can request an absentee ballot by visiting the National Association of Secretaries of State [website](#) and selecting your state from the drop down menu. Once you click your state, the specific requirements and procedures for absentee voting of your state will load on the webpage.

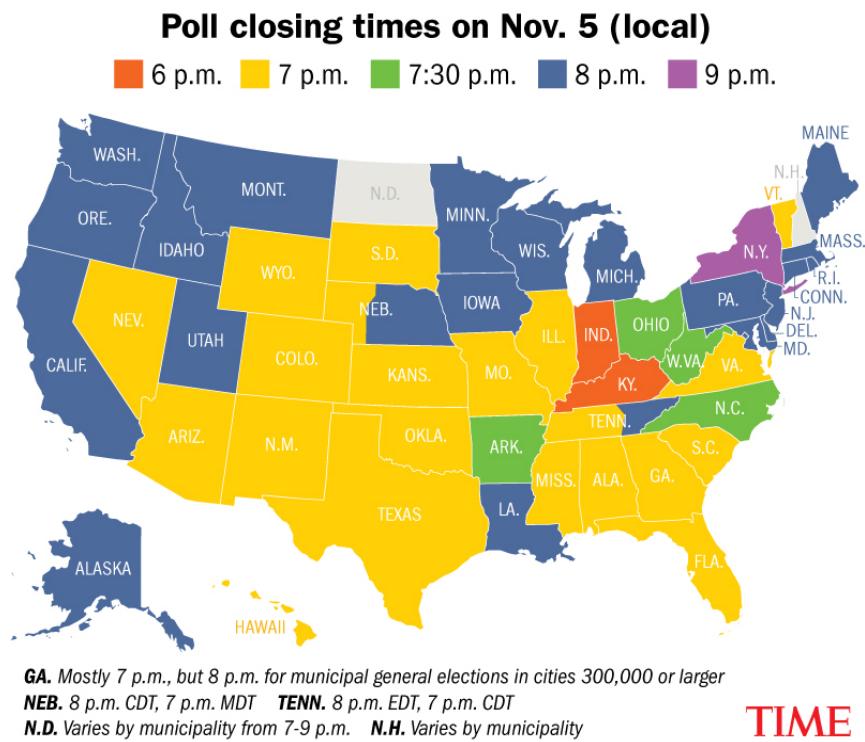
If you are a U.S. citizen who lives outside of the U.S., are in the military, or are a family member of someone in the military, you can request an absentee ballot via the [Federal Voting Assistance Program](#). In order to fill in a ballot this way, you will need to know your state of voting residence and have access to a printer and Adobe Read version 6.0 or higher. — A.G.

## **How late are polls open?**

Polling hours vary state by state—sometimes even county by county.

On TIME's Map below, you can see when exactly the polls in your state close. Since poll closing times vary in [North Dakota](#) and [New](#)

[Hampshire](#), you can utilize search functions on each state's respective website.



On Election Day, if you are already in line at a polling place when the polls close, you should stay in line. Voting does not end until the last person in line at the time the polls close gets to vote.

If anyone is asking you to leave, stay in the line and call or text the Election Protection Hotline, which has different lines for different language speakers. For English speakers, call 1-866-OUR-VOTE / 1-866-687-8683, for Spanish speakers, call 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA / 1-888-839-8682, for Arabic speakers, call 1-844-YALLA-US / 1-844-925-5287, and for Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog, or Vietnamese, call 1-888-274-8683. —  
*Rebecca Schneid*

## What's on my ballot?

For the 2024 general election, the presidential race between Donald Trump and Kamala Harris isn't the only choice on the ballot.

The other decisions facing voters vary by state and municipality. Ten states—including Florida and Nevada—will vote on measures that will allow voters to [decide whether to protect abortion rights](#). Some states, including Alaska and Missouri, will vote on issues related to minimum wage.

**Read More:** *[Here's Where Abortion Will Be on the Ballot in the 2024 Election.](#)*

There are multiple ways for voters to request a sample ballot so they can see both what propositions will be on their state ballot and what local, state, and federal positions will appear on their ballot. [Vote.org](#) and [Ballotpedia](#) both have sample ballot lookup tools.

If you'd rather go through official government websites, many states—including [Minnesota](#), [Wisconsin](#) and [New York](#)—have their own “What’s On My Ballot” pages, in which citizens can place their address and receive a sample ballot. — R.S.

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<https://time.com/7024848>

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# Colombian President Gustavo Petro Is on a Mission Against Fossil Fuels

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



*Puede leer nuestro artículo en Español [aquí](#).*

Last year, Colombian President [Gustavo Petro](#) watched in dismay as a political and economic crisis unfolded on the other side of his country's eastern border. Global powers had imposed sanctions on Venezuela's oil exports after the country's autocratic leader, [Nicolás Maduro](#), allegedly rigged his re-election. As hyperinflation fueled turmoil, millions of refugees poured into Colombia to escape.

In the heat of the moment, Petro decided to talk to Maduro about an idea: the leftist strongman should propose a climate pact with the country's opposition leaders to wean Venezuela off oil. That could boost the economy by ending its dependence on oil exports,

Petro said, and it could help mend the country's broken politics. Most of all, it would save the world from the climate change that would result from Venezuela fully exploiting its oil.

The response: crickets. "I have mentioned it to Maduro, I have mentioned it to the opposition when I can talk to them," a chagrined Petro told me in August. "But I think I am speaking another language when I talk to them."

When it comes to climate change, Petro dreams big, even if it scares many in Colombia and threatens the country's short-term economic interests. The former guerrilla turned climate crusader took office as President in 2022 promising to phase out fossil fuels, no small project for a nation where more than 50% of exports come from oil and coal. In office, he has stopped approval of new drilling and constrained the [state-owned oil company](#) even when deals promised big returns. Abroad, he has pushed other leaders to create their own phaseout plans. "I want to take the step to end coal- and gas-based energy," he told me.

In the course of two interviews, one at the [COP28 climate conference](#) in Dubai and another at the Casa de Nariño presidential palace in Bogotá, Petro described climate change as central to his agenda. "I consider it as a prism. Every public policy can be viewed through that prism," he says. "You can measure public policy by whether it exacerbates or mitigates the crisis, and make decisions based on that."

But quitting fossil fuels in a country whose economy relies on them is ... complicated. Petro's agenda, and the uncertainty that it has created, has contributed to skepticism from investors globally. That has made financing projects to supplant fossil fuels harder and contributed to the view that Petro's idealism is hurting the country. [In polls](#), more than 60% of Colombians say they don't approve of his tenure. "What's going on in Colombia is beyond ideology," says Iván Duque Márquez, a former President of Colombia who

has become a leading global voice on climate and nature conservation. “Our people are afraid that he’s going to wreck the energy market.”

His supporters say Petro is stating the realities of climate science plainly as they are. Indeed, the world needs to end its addiction to fossil fuels—and fast. Petro’s efforts reflect that urgency, they believe. But with two years remaining in his term, the Colombian President’s radical approach faces a difficult reality: to enact his agenda, he needs to work with the market. And that will require more than bold vision.

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**The journey** from the first police checkpoint outside the Casa de Nariño to Petro’s office is formalities followed by formality: multiple security stops and ID scans, then hold in an ornate room with servers bringing fine Colombian coffee. Inside Petro’s office, the atmosphere is strikingly different. Papers haphazardly cover the tables. A graphic novel sits below some official-looking documents. Another pile of books includes one offering an economic assessment of “crime as a profession.” A side table is stacked with yet more papers and a bag of coffee beans.

The President enters the room, dressed casually in jeans and a blazer. Bespectacled and slightly disheveled, he has less the air of a politician and more that of a wizened college professor. Widely known, and derided, for being a prolific tweeter, he remains engrossed in his phone for several paces, before looking up to greet me.

Suffice it to say, Petro is not a typical head of government. Where his predecessors made their names aligning with Colombian elites, Petro acted as a renegade and started [his own political party](#). And where others speak in pithy talking points, he tends to long, winding answers filled with academic vocabulary. More than

anything, Petro stands out because he rose to prominence as a guerrilla.

In his 2021 autobiography, *One Life, Many Lives*, he paints his transformation from bookish university student to rebel as one of patriotic duty. In 1970, after more than a decade of a power-sharing agreement that saw the country's two long-standing parties essentially rotate the presidency without any real opposition, allegations of fraud generated widespread civil unrest. Petro was keen to join in as the militant group M19, which was formed in response to the contested election, rose in influence in the years that followed. His inspiration came not from reading Marx, he wrote, but of a “popular struggle born from the cultural values and history of Colombia.”

For roughly a decade, he worked for M19, serving as a representative in his hometown and distributing propaganda. The group, which claimed true electoral democracy as its greatest goal, was less violent than other militant groups, and Petro has said that his role didn’t involve participation in some of the group’s more extreme undertakings. Critics doubt it, but in any event, he was in prison at the time of the group’s most infamous act: an invasion of the Palace of Justice. After the event, he advocated for the peace talks that would eventually lead to M19 becoming a political party.

His climate transformation began in 1994 in Belgium, where he moved to serve as a diplomatic attaché, continue his studies, and escape death threats that dogged him in Colombia. At the University of Louvain, he studied development and the environment, and became absorbed in the work of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, which linked physics, natural resources, and economics. Today, Georgescu-Roegen is known among climate economists, but his work isn’t at the center of policy discussions. Long after entering the political arena and serving as a Senator and the mayor of Bogotá, however, Petro says he still refers to his copy of Georgescu-Roegen’s most influential work for guidance.

Petro's academic orientation is reflected in his governance style too, with a firm adherence to principles over practicality. When it comes to climate change, he says, "I have studied it more and more, trying to read everything I can, gathering literature on it."

Petro has crafted his own philosophy of [climate and economics](#), one that places him outside the political tradition in which he is often associated. Historically, Latin American leftists from Brazil to Mexico have relied on oil as a source of revenue to fund their social-development priorities. He sees himself as pioneering what he calls decarbonized progressivism. "The invitation to the classic Latin American left is to broaden its horizon," he says.



The approach, in his telling, isn't necessarily anti-capitalist. He wants private-sector money to contribute to a transition away from oil and gas. But he also wants to tell that capital where to go. Just before I arrived in Bogotá, he unveiled a proposal for "forced investment" to require Colombian banks to finance his projects. A few weeks later, he backtracked and brokered a [compromise with the banks](#).

Petro says that he is writing a book that will explore whether capitalism can address the climate crisis, but that he hasn't been able to complete it because his other duties leading the country

keep getting in the way. He says he's not sure the reconciliation is possible. "If capitalism cannot, because it lacks planning capacity," he says, then "humanity will overcome capitalism on a global scale because the alternative is that humanity will die with capitalism."

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**All this theory** is having a real-world impact on Colombians, especially in his approach to the country's oil sector. Petro entered office and immediately raised taxes on oil and coal companies. He stopped new permits for oil exploration and drilling. He replaced the longtime CEO of the state-owned oil company, Ecopetrol, with his campaign manager, a political operator with experience in the country's power sector. When I was in town, Ecopetrol nixed a **\$3.6 billion deal** with U.S. oil major Occidental Petroleum.

These moves carry a significant political cost for Petro, agitating those focused on short-term economic outcomes and discouraging foreign investment everywhere in Colombia. "He has made it very clear to the world that he is antioil, antigas, anti-fracking and anti-United States," Occidental CEO Vicki Hollub told investors after Petro blew up the deal.

Petro acknowledges that others call his approach political "suicide." But drilling more would represent a societal suicide, he says. "If Colombia's coal reserves were used, and if Venezuela's oil reserves were used, you couldn't interview me again," he says. "The world would burn. Just in the Colombian-Venezuelan subsoil, there is a weapon of mass destruction."

Petro isn't oblivious to the realities of oil markets, and in his telling, he is getting ahead of the problem. Colombian oil is a less desirable **heavy crude** and far more expensive to produce than oil from the Middle East. It's a common view: as demand fades, as some analysts say will happen soon, expensive oil from places like Colombia will get squeezed out early. Remaking the economy now avoids economic pain later, he reasons.

Petro's alternative economic vision is to lean into Colombia's natural wealth, excluding fossil fuels. He aims to attract payments to protect rainforests that make up more than a third of the country and expand the rapidly growing tourism sector. Most boldly, he wants to invest in the country's renewable energy resources, collecting wind, solar, and hydroelectric power and shipping it across the Western Hemisphere via a pan-American electric grid. "Instead of exporting fossil energy, we would export clean energy," he says.



In October, members of his cabinet traveled to the coastal city of Barranquilla and laid out a \$40 billion portfolio of projects designed to achieve Petro's vision. The Mines and Energy Ministry described plans for a new energy company that will build renewables on the northern coast. The Commerce, Industry, and Tourism Ministry presented a lending program for small tourism businesses. The Environment Ministry proposed new programs to fund biodiversity protection. "We expect, now after all of this, that this may work to help push the economic goals," María Susana Muhamad, the country's Environment Minister, told me ahead of the announcement.

Colombia has already succeeded in finding some money to protect nature, but in the long term replacing dependence on oil will

require private finance at a much bigger scale. That leaves Petro, and his country, in a bind. He has a big vision for a prosperous, decarbonized Colombia. But so long as he's in charge, foreign and domestic investors may remain less enthusiastic.

It doesn't help that Petro is out of step with Colombia's political establishment. The country has not had a left-wing President in its modern history. That has left Petro without control over the institutional levers available to many other leaders. Moreover, the combination of big talk and strained delivery only fuels Petro's most ardent critics, including those who support climate action. Recent Presidents have promoted conservation and an energy transition. But Petro's history as a guerrilla, a series of [corruption scandals](#) plaguing his government, and his unconventional economic leadership are endangering the country's reputation, they say. "How can you invest in an economy where your profits depend on the mood of the President?" says former conservative President Duque. "It's absolutely reckless."

Even would-be allies have criticized Petro. In February, Jorge Iván González resigned as the head of Colombia's National Planning Department at Petro's request. In short order, he penned a column praising Petro's vision but criticizing his unwillingness to accept the practical limitations to enacting it. "Instead of accepting the facts," González wrote in *La República*, a Colombian business paper, "the ruler falls into the temptation of denying them."

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**Petro is forging ahead** regardless. Workers were still putting the finishing touches on the parklike grounds surrounding the 85-ft. Monumento a Cristo Rey when I arrived on an early August morning after a short plane ride from Bogotá. The site in the center of the Colombian city of Cali offers a glimpse of what Petro's vision could look like. Tourists are drawn to the eye-catching hilltop statue. Nearby land is protected, some under programs where foreign companies pay locals to preserve the land. "If we

have more eco-tourism in the park, that helps us protect it,” says Cali Mayor Alejandro Eder.

The city hosted a major global conference in November that aims at implementing a deal to protect 30% of the world’s land and oceans by 2030. Countries are debating mechanisms to share genetic material and formalizing financial programs. Hosting the conference gives Petro’s government a hand in shepherding the agenda of international nature conservation while also creating an opportunity to drum up international support for his domestic agenda.

Last year, Colombia partnered with Germany, Kenya, and France to explore programs that might forgive sovereign debt in exchange for nature protection and climate action, drawing the attention of multilateral development banks. He has championed the role that Indigenous people and African descendants can play addressing climate change. And he became a key advocate on the global stage pushing for an international treaty to [cut fossil-fuel emissions](#).

But despite some successes, he still thinks that most of his fellow heads of government have failed to recognize the scale of the problem and are offering inadequate solutions. “The Presidents come to make some prefabricated speeches that they themselves do not write, generally, that introduce what I would call a ‘correct’ policy,” he told me in Dubai. “That ‘correct’ policy is false.”

Instead of offering piecemeal solutions, Petro says he is focused on a vision to avoid what he terms “collective suicide.” There is a way in which this approach is admirable. To honestly face the conclusions of climate science is to recognize that humanity is on the brink of irreversible and [catastrophic change](#). It’s the role of leaders to chart a way forward, no matter the tough politics.

But what good does it do if others don’t follow? In that regard, Petro is his own toughest critic. He knows people hear him, but to

what end? “We draw attention in the world for this. They listen to us,” he says. “They don’t pay heed, but they listen.”

*TIME receives support for climate coverage from the Outrider Foundation. TIME is solely responsible for all content*

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## Mel Robbins Will Make You Do It

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



Seven minutes of chitchat and one real question into an interview, Mel Robbins begins to cry. Her eyes brim with tears behind her signature glasses; her confident voice gets squeaky. Here's the question: *how would you describe what you do?* Not exactly a

hardball, especially for Robbins, who has an everything-must-go approach to self-disclosure. This is a woman who on her wildly popular podcast described the appearance of her aging breasts as “dirty gym socks,” and has also given listeners a letter-and-verse account of her urinary incontinence. A job description should be a light lift.

Then again, Robbins, 56, has had so many incarnations, perhaps it’s complicated to sum up for a stranger who she now is. She has been a public defender, a life coach, a syndicated talk-radio host, a CNN legal analyst, an entrepreneur, a motivational speaker, a self-help author, a daytime talk-show host, and now a luminary of the podcast world and mini media tycoon. She has also, famously, been \$800,000 in debt. Her high moments have been giddyng and her lows desperate.

Robbins’ style, trained as she is for radio, where silence is referred to as “dead air,” is to keep talking until she figures out what she wants to say. She tries to describe what she does in several different ways. “I think a lot about the magic of taking a walk with a friend,” she says, as she chokes up. “When you take a walk with a friend, you feel better.” Switching to business terms, she explains how she’s trying to transform that friend-feeling into content: “I’ve built a production and media company that focuses on the human experience.” As she regains her composure, she adds, “I am on a mission to find as many stories and pieces of science and research and tools that a person can use to make their life a little better.”

Finally, she jumps ahead to the question that lies underneath the question, the one that eventually all motivational gurus (a term she hates) such as Robbins face. “The hardest thing about what I do is that oftentimes the advice and the tools sound dumb or repetitive,” she says. And there it is, the real truth of Mel Robbins, disclosed by herself. She is the queen of stupendously obvious advice, the psychological equivalent of a doctor who suggests you try breathing in *and* out. But—and here’s the amazingly simple hack

that you won't believe really works!—people listen to her and attempt to do what she suggests. "I spend a lot of time thinking about how I make this information that you're going to care about, information that you're going to connect to, and information that you're going to trust enough to try," she says.

Her best-selling book, *The 5-Second Rule*, is about motivating yourself to do something by counting backward from 5 and then doing it, much as one might encourage a reluctant child. Her second best-selling book, *The High 5 Habit*, coaches people to look at themselves in the mirror in the morning, think about what they have to do that day, and then literally high-five their reflection. It has more than 6,000 five-star reviews on Amazon, many of them calling it transformative. And in December she will release a new book, *The Let Them Theory*. The premise of this one—already hovering at the top of Amazon's bestsellers list—is, pretty much, that people will be happier if they quit trying to control other people.



If you're thinking these insights seem like thin gruel on which to nourish a media company, Robbins in some ways agrees with you. She's fully aware how basic they seem. What Robbins sells,

however, is not just advice. She's offering her listeners a reason to believe in themselves. On Oct. 23, SiriusXM [announced](#) it had reupped her contract in a three-year deal in which she will not only continue to produce *The Mel Robbins Podcast*, but also launch a second show in early 2025. "Every single player was in the mix for the next ad-sales deal," Robbins says, "and we were told by three different groups that based on the numbers, this is the single fastest-growing podcast they've seen."

Since the first podcast was launched a mere two years ago, more than 187 million episodes have been downloaded and it has spread to 98 countries. People have spent 22 million hours watching it on YouTube, where she has 3 million subscribers. She has 6.5 million followers on Instagram, 2 million on TikTok, 2.5 million on Facebook, and six audiobooks that have hit No. 1 on Audible. At the end of 2023, her podcast was named the fifth most followed on Apple's charts, prompting the Kelce brothers (whose podcast was third) to give her a shout-out.

Robbins has become the voice in people's heads—often literally, since many listen on earbuds—encouraging them to keep going, insisting that they can do it, and shouting down the murmurs of self-doubt. In every podcast she says the same thing: "In case anyone hasn't told you today, I love you," a line that's so corny it could be distilled into ethanol. And yet because it comes from her, people drink it up like syrup.

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**The morning TIME visits** her book-lined Boston studio, Robbins, wearing a cool but relatable ensemble of black shirt, jeans, and Air Jordans, is interviewing [Dr. Aditi Nerurkar](#), an author and physician at Harvard Medical School who specializes in stress. Nerurkar is talking about the difference between hedonic happiness and eudaimonic happiness. She's expounding on "horizonlessness" where young people can't get their bearings. Robbins repeats what Nerurkar says, synthesizing it and trying to find a practical

application, all while blowing sunshine the doctor's way. She's interviewer, translator, therapist, and cheerleader.

Toward the end of the interview, Robbins scribbles a note on a card and draws a box around it several times. She also, she tells me later, presses a tap pad under her desk that sends a message to the mixing desk that this is the key point of the interview. "My role, especially with the experts, is really translating, clarifying, distilling, making it entertaining, making somebody that is steeped in their research relatable and human, so that somebody listening to them doesn't feel less than or dumb."

Nerurkar is not just a guest; she's a fan. "You have an uncanny gift for getting into the head of people," she tells Robbins after the interview but before they emerge from the studio into a standing ovation from the staff. (Everyone gets that, even reporters.) "I'm sitting across from a hero." Last time she was on Robbins' show, her book sales blew up like a case of hives. "You are the ultimate hype woman," she tells Robbins. [Dr. Mary Claire Haver](#), whose specialty is [menopause](#), had a similar experience. Her interview with Robbins, which is now the most popular episode the show has ever done, aired a few weeks before her first book came out. "It was like a juggernaut," she says. "It was more powerful than anything I've ever done, as far as reach." By release date, the book had presold 70,000 copies, much of which Haver attributes to Robbins.

Why does it make such a difference to people when Robbins gives the advice? Partly it's her voice. She has a lively smoky tone, with a lot of empathy and a hint of mischief, like a scandalous but wise aunt. Partly it's skills honed in years of radio, where you have to keep people from changing the dial as the ads approach by dangling treats that await. Partly it's her infallible radar for zeroing in on the one nugget in a litany of nuanced observations made by scholarly guests.

A quick study, she can consume a large volume of research material and not only pull out the most compelling takeaway but buttress her advice with findings from the academic, often neuroscientific literature. The reason it works to count to 5 backward and then go, she proposes, is that it counteracts the natural hesitation the brain engages in before doing something new to make sure it's safe. If you make a move right after the five-second window, you don't have time to overthink and get anxious.

But mostly people listen to Robbins because she tells stories. One of her most popular podcasts, about how to find out what you want, is illustrative of her methods. She spends the first two-thirds of the show sharing tales of people who are unclear about what they want. She uses whatever material she has on hand, in this case her daughter Sawyer and sister-in-law Christine Harwig. Sawyer talks about moving to New York City; Harwig wishes she had a lake house. Then, after 29 minutes, including five promo spots, Robbins demonstrates the technique of uncovering what you actually want by asking why five times to really burrow into the kernel of the desire. Her daughter wants to fulfill a childhood dream. Her sister-in-law wants more time with her teenage sons. The method takes about three minutes to explain, but a full 45 to make compelling.



**Being a content producer is a grind.** Robbins throws up two podcasts a week, plus endless social media riffs. She knows how to do this from years of nattering on air and because she cooks all the parts of the chicken. A cat sleeping on her lap becomes a post about not letting other things perturb you. Falling asleep in workout clothes becomes a post about motivation. She uses the most popular of those as a guide to what might be a good podcast and she uses the most popular of *those* as a guide to what might be a good book. The idea for *Let Them* went from a moment where she was worrying about how disorganized her son was about prom to an Instagram post and podcast so popular, says Robbins, it inspired tattoos. “What was revelatory to me is that you can’t truly be in control of what you’re doing until you first stop living your life as if you can control what other people are doing,” she says. “When you say, let them, you detach from trying to control that person, and then you remind yourself, let me choose how I’m going to respond to this.”

She noticed echoes of the idea in Buddhism, stoicism, and the work of [Dr. Robert Waldinger](#), the psychiatrist behind the Harvard Study of Adult Development. “It’s the single best thing I’ve ever done,” she says. “It’s got everything that I look for. It is personal. It is backed by just a tremendous amount of research in science. It is so simple, you can teach it to a fifth grader. And in a moment where you are overwhelmed by your emotions, you can remember it. And that’s key, because if you can’t remember what to do, you won’t use the advice.”

Robbin’s richest vein of raw material, however, is her own backstory. Born Melanie Lee Schneeberger to a mother who left college after getting pregnant her sophomore year and a father who would go on to become an osteopathic doctor, Robbins grew up in Muskegon, Mich. She excelled at school, particularly at math, was accepted into Dartmouth, “and proceeded to have from college through law school [at Boston College] eight of the worst years of my life,” she says. “I had no idea that I had been struggling profoundly with [dyslexia](#) and [ADHD](#).” She was only able to keep up with the workload, she says, because her anxiety disorder made her work so hard.

She was unaware of those conditions at the time; she just knew she was miserable, drinking too much, cheating on boyfriends, and doing too many all-nighters. The memory of it brings her to tears again. “I didn’t know,” she says, weeping. “I didn’t f-cking know. There are so many things that I did that I regret, because I just didn’t know, and I hurt myself.” Part of what drives Robbins, she says, is that other people might be like she was. “I feel like almost every human being has something like that that they just didn’t know.”

Robbins was a public defender in New York City for a few years and represented a lot of people trying to make bail. “I saw how many people don’t have anybody showing up for them, and it left a huge mark on me,” she says. But she didn’t enjoy it, nor family

law, and in 1999, after marrying and moving about an hour outside Boston, she started a business as a life coach.

Five years and two children later, her husband, Christopher Robbins, got laid off and decided to open his own business too, a pizza restaurant, which did well. He then opened another and another in quick succession, and there was a cash-flow squeeze, just as Robbins was having a third child and cutting back on her \$250-an-hour life-coaching sessions. The couple took on a massive amount of debt. Robbins says she had a rehearsed routine for when her cards were declined at the grocery store. “I would cock my head a little to the left and go, ‘That’s funny, it just worked at the gas station. Hold on, I’m gonna go out to the car. Come on, kids.’ And I’d leave,” she says. But it got to her. “Never in a million years did I think at the age of 41 that I would be struggling with drinking, ready to kill my husband, just unable to get out of bed.”

Robbins, who often reminds listeners that “no one is coming to save you,” got a \$25-an-hour gig as a local morning-radio talk-show host on weekends. “It was like a lifeline to talk to people that didn’t know the sh-tstorm that was going on in my life,” she says, and she was good at it. In 2012, five years after starting in radio, she got an official job at WBDO in Orlando. “I remember our very first meeting. It was one of those great meetings,” says Drew Anderssen, the show’s then producer. “Mel wanted to be a star, and she is a star. She had a way of making people feel really good.” When [Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman](#) in nearby Sanford, Fla., in 2012, Anderssen put her on the story and the case that followed. From there CNN hired her as an on-air legal analyst.



To pay the bills, she also developed a side career as a motivational speaker and author and got invited to speak at a TEDx event in San Francisco. At the end of her talk, “How to Stop Screwing Yourself Over,” she almost forgot to mention this little idea she had called the 5-Second Rule. She also gave out her personal email, which eventually she had to ask be edited out. The talk went viral, and she began to focus more on speaking and writing and less on TV. In 2017, she released *The 5-Second Rule*, which went on to become the best-selling self-published audiobook of all time.

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**While the past decade** has been one of expanding successes, with an ever-growing footprint on social media, bigger paydays (a reported \$100,000) for her corporate gigs, and two monster books, it’s been no cakewalk. Her eponymous daytime talk show, launched

with some fanfare in 2019, was canceled after just one season. “It wasn’t good,” she says when asked why it was axed. But true to Robbins’ brand, the big public failure was a learning experience. “It taught me that I need to be in control of what I’m doing,” she says. “I am not a player in someone else’s game.”

Thus her podcast is produced by her own company, 143 Studios (named after the address of an apartment in Manhattan the couple lived in), and her new book, like her previous ones, is being released through a self-publishing platform. On the day TIME visits her office, each member of the largely female staff is wearing a magnetic name tag, including Harwig, who is the CFO and COO, and Sawyer, who works in marketing.

It’s safe to say the Robbinses are out of debt now. During the pandemic, the family bought and moved into her husband’s parents’ house on a hill in Vermont. Christopher runs a men’s retreat business, is a death doula, and is, by the looks of his Instagram, gloriously happy. Robbins wears a flashy diamond-encrusted ring, a present from her husband to mark 26 years of marriage. The last time she took Anderssen to lunch and talked about how much money she was making, he regretted suggesting the Magical Dining Month budget-price menu.

But her extremely fast rise in the podcast world has led to oversights. Recently Harwig discovered that Robbins was scammed out of hundreds of thousands of dollars in corporate speaking payments in an elaborate ruse that ensnared her speaking agent. (A business partner’s insurance covered it.) Robbins hadn’t noticed. “I’ve learned in running this business that I am fantastic at business development and fantastic as a creator,” she says. “I am horrendous at operations.”

Robbins believes her whole life has led her to this point. The financial difficulties, the ADHD, the public failures, the private struggles have all primed her to be a beacon pointing the way for

people to improve their lives. Her studio location in Boston gives her access to a slate of world-class boffins who have done interesting research but lack the skill set to present it in a meaningful way. Her love of tech and data has helped her adapt to social media and discern what messages resonate with people. In a media race where relatability is more important than authority, her brand of empathetic imperfection is like rocket fuel. And in a world of parasocial relationships, the oversharer is queen.

Robbins cries one last time during our three-hour conversation, as she speaks of a visitor-center attendant in Iceland who recognized her voice when she asked for directions to the bathroom, burst into tears, and shared how her YouTube videos were a lifeline during a painful divorce. “Every time somebody stops me, it’s just a reminder of how that’s all you need, a little encouragement,” says Robbins, taking a moment to steady herself. “It’s really as simple as that.” There will always be people who say she just found a way to make money with extremely basic, even stupid, advice. Let them.

## **Correction, October 30**

*The original version of this story misstated the year in which Robbins' mother left college to get married. It was her sophomore year, not her freshman.*

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<https://time.com/7095878>

## We Had Martha Stewart Wrong All Along

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



Long before Instagram and TikTok existed as places for us to stoke our insecurities, there was [Martha Stewart](#). Martha, circa 1995, smiling from the pages of her namesake magazine as she put the finishing touches on a Versailles-worthy pastel cake. Martha, again in the mid-1990s, ably demonstrating the only proper way to prune an unruly tree. Martha, in early 2004, the picture of quiet luxury in her downy, twig-colored woolens as she strode into the Manhattan federal courthouse during her trial on nine criminal counts associated with the ImClone insider-trading scandal. You could love her, you could hate her, you could love to hate her or vice versa. Her mission, it seemed, was twofold: to teach you how to do seemingly unachievable things around the home, and to make you feel inadequate.

But if Martha Stewart gave many of us our first taste of feeling terrifically ill-suited to any domestic task or even just to [basic](#)

[living](#), she also inadvertently reminded us that when it comes to nurturing self-confidence, we're our own worst enemies. Her confidence and drive for perfection made us feel bad; we decided our hurt feelings were *her* fault. But now—when our social media feeds are filled with beautiful people doing remarkable things that most of us will never be able to pull off, or afford—it's time to reconsider the rise, fall, and rise of Martha Stewart. The degree to which she both inspired and angered so many of us is still something to reckon with. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

If you still need convincing that Martha Stewart is a [human being much like the rest of us](#)—albeit one who can cook a turkey inside a puff pastry without once bursting into tears—R.J. Cutler’s documentary *Martha*, streaming on Netflix, should do the trick. Stewart has done some remarkable things: She worked as a teenage model. She was a stockbroker in the late 1960s, a rarity for a woman at the time. She launched a successful catering business in 1973. That spurred the release of her first cookbook, 1982’s *Entertaining*, which led to television appearances and more books. By the late 1990s, she had built herself into a juggernaut of a brand; she was the first woman in the United States to become a self-made billionaire.

But her background was hardly privileged. *Martha* introduces us to young, fresh-faced Martha Kostyra, one of a family of six kids growing up in Nutley, N.J., in the 1940s and ’50s. Her mother taught her about home-making; [her perfectionist father](#) passed his love of gardening on to her. Stewart acknowledges she was her father’s favorite; like him, she was a stickler for details. But her childhood and youth weren’t easy. The family was often broke, so Stewart needed that modeling money: the \$15 per hour it brought in made a world of difference. After graduating from high school, she enrolled at Barnard and began dating Andy Stewart, the brother of a fellow student. The two married in 1961. They had a daughter, Alexis, and eventually bought and restored an old farmhouse in

Westport, Conn. The property became both proof of Stewart's homemaking-skills-in-overdrive and an inspiration to millions of others who hoped to work the same magic in their own homes.

But the marriage fell apart, and even Martha Stewart—poised, sometimes, to the point of frostiness—has a heart to break. Perfectionists are also often idealists; dashed expectations can crush them. "I always said I was a swan," she says on camera, noting that swans are monogamous. "I thought monogamy was admirable ... but it turned out it didn't save the marriage." She pauses. Her expression shifts from wistfulness to something more resolute before she says, "Can we get on to a happier subject?"



But then, Stewart—not as perfect as we may have thought—also admits on camera to having had an adulterous affair herself, though she notes that it was fleeting. As a documentarian, Cutler knows how to nudge his subjects into being perhaps a little more revealing than they'd like. His superb 2009 documentary *The September Issue* pulled back the curtain on the inner workings of *Vogue* magazine, as orchestrated by the indomitable Anna Wintour. Stewart is an even better subject for Cutler, because she, unlike Wintour, fell from a very high perch—and not only recovered but also managed to transform into a better version of her old self. In 2005, Stewart was [sentenced to five months in prison](#), for lying to the FBI when she was questioned about her involvement in the

ImClone case. Her early days at West Virginia's Alderson Federal Prison Camp were bleak. Her compatriots found her aloof, and some wanted to hurt her. She spent a day in solitary confinement for inadvertently touching a prison officer. The food was the opposite of fresh. Her boyfriend at the time, software billionaire Charles Simonyi, visited her only once. (Not long after her release, he abruptly dropped her.) "I feel very inconsequential today," she wrote in her journal, in the early days of her incarceration. "As if no one would miss me if I never came back to reality."

There's probably someone out there who delights in knowing that the always perfect Martha Stewart ever felt this low. But would you really want to meet that person? In the 1980s and '90s, Stewart was an easy target for mass derision and mockery, on *Saturday Night Live* and everywhere else. And in some ways, she invited it: she really did come off as smug. But no one in her 80s is the same person she was in her 20s, 50s, or 60s. And not even Martha Stewart is still the Martha Stewart we knew from her earlier books, magazines, and television shows. In *Martha*, she appears on camera in a silky black blouse trimmed with a simple neckband of tiny, discreetly sparkly stones. Her fair, dewy skin looks better than just "young." Rather, it's ageless in a suitably age-appropriate way. This is also a woman who graced the cover of *Sports Illustrated*'s swimsuit issue at age 81, wearing only a simple white bathing suit and a drape made of apricot taffeta. Her smile is both daring and darling, as if she's harboring a valuable secret gleaned from years of experience—though she's not giving it away for nothing.

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Cutler's documentary, though, spills some of those secrets for her. It shows us, through re-enactments rendered in drawings, how Stewart made the most of her time in prison. She gave talks, advising the other women on how they might start their own businesses after their release. She cleaned bathrooms. She made sure she learned something new every day. And when her sentence was complete, she stepped back into the world wearing a swingy-chic poncho that a friend and fellow inmate had hand-crocheted for her. DIY devotees grabbed their hooks and eagerly made their own versions.

That poncho was a symbol of something Stewart had always stood for, even though many had over the years misread—and even been angered by—her message. Stewart believed in the democracy, and the pleasure, of the “domestic arts,” historically the province of women. She wanted us to know that those skills, long considered inferior to manly pursuits, had value. You *could* learn to crochet. You *could* use gold leaf to make an Easter egg worthy of a king. You *could* assemble a bunch of garden flowers in an earthenware vase and make it look like a million bucks. Your results might not be as perfect as Martha’s, and she probably knew that as well as you did. But maybe setting the bar high was a sign of respect for her audience, rather than condescension. Really, she just wanted you to try.

The subtext of *Martha* is that Stewart has been punished enough. She's earned her day in the sun. And sure enough, today, almost everyone loves her. Her Instagram account—complete with “thirst trap” selfies and photos taken with one of her besties, Snoop Dogg—is a delight. Her 100th cookbook will be published this month. And maybe now those of us who once snickered at her dogged pursuit of perfection, or delighted in hearing that she wasn’t a particularly nice person—I confess I used to be one of them—can see that we were participating in an insidious form of misogyny. As her son-in-law, lawyer John Cuti, puts it in *Martha*, “She was a tough boss, but some of the behavior that she would be taken to task for would be applauded if a man did it in the business world. That’s a cliché at this point, but it doesn’t mean it wasn’t true.”

We also see vintage 1990s footage of Owen J. Lipstein, the editor in chief of the ever sardonic *Spy* magazine, making this lofty pronouncement: “The more you know about this woman, the less you like her.” Being liked: it’s what every woman wants. Right? Yet maybe Stewart—particularly the younger, bolder, world-conquering Stewart, who asked for everything she wanted even as men in power tried to block her—didn’t care so much. And today, the more we know about this woman, the more we like her. She no longer makes us feel bad about ourselves. Because after all, it has always been our job, not hers, to guard our self-worth. And if, along the way, we learned something about how to make exceptionally lifelike fondant butterflies, daisies, or forget-me-nots? That was just the icing on the cake.

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<https://time.com/7097438>

## How Exhibiting Forgiveness Explores the Limits of Religion and Absolution



In 2016, [Titus Kaphar](#) made *The Jerome Project*, a short documentary in which he confronted how his father's abuse and drug use harmed his childhood. But upon completing it, he discovered that he had only scratched the surface. "When I finished the project, what was clear to me is that it did a good job of telling us where we were, but not how we got there," says Kaphar.

So he turned to fiction. In his new film *Exhibiting Forgiveness*, which premiered at the [Sundance Film Festival](#) in January and hits theaters October 18, Kaphar casts André Holland as Tarrell, a [celebrated American painter](#) (as Kaphar is) whose life is unmoored by the re-emergence of his abusive father La'Ron (John Earl Jelks) and the fragile health of his mother Joyce ([Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor](#)). La'Ron and Joyce's religious beliefs create the expectation that Tarrell will grant easy absolution to La'Ron, thrusting Tarrell into a chaotic battle between his religious values and the long-standing hurt he still carries. The film breaks from a long tradition in Black cinema of relying on religion, and the forgiveness it demands, as an all-healing balm. Instead, it offers a raw and realistic portrayal of what it looks like to process childhood trauma well into adulthood.

And it allowed Kaphar himself to dig deeper. “Allowing fiction to play a part in *Exhibiting Forgiveness* allowed me to go into my father’s head in a way that a documentary wouldn’t allow me to do.”

Kaphar’s art has often provided space to revisit the past. *The Jerome Project* was born out of a search in prison records for information about his father. In that process, he not only discovered mugshots of 97 other incarcerated Black men who share his father’s first and last name, he also interviewed them and painted Renaissance and Byzantine religious-inspired portraits of them on gold-leaf backgrounds dipped in tar. His other works further reclaim history through white-washed portraits of [Black Civil War soldiers](#), collages that place Black people’s faces in confrontation with slave-holding white figures, and devotional scenes that refigure Black people into Biblical text.

*Exhibiting Forgiveness* is a culmination of the deep hurt and conflicting feelings that have inspired his work. “A friend of mine said after seeing the film, ‘You’ve been painting this movie your entire life,’” says Kaphar. His close partner in the movie’s conception is Holland, an actor whose inviting gaze and coy smile has powered [Barry Jenkins’ \*Moonlight\*](#), [Ava DuVernay’s \*Selma\*](#), and [Steven Soderbergh’s \*High Flying Bird\*](#). Watching the desperate heartache and frank ruminations that carve Tarrell’s ups and downs, you get the sense that only together could Kaphar and Holland have arrived at such an honest portrayal of religion’s limits for processing generational trauma.

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Holland and Kaphar began to develop their bond months before the latter said “action.” In a bid for realism, the director invited his star to his studio in New Haven, Conn. to learn how to paint. During that period, the pair also learned about each other. “We have very different relationships to our fathers, but we still profoundly connected with each other about our fathers,” Holland explains during our Zoom conversation ahead of the movie’s theatrical release.

“André commitment to his practice is profound and pretty much the only reason why this film could work,” explains Kaphar. “You need to have somebody who’s willing to go all the way. It’s not for the faint of heart.” Holland: “This territory that we are trafficking in was obviously pretty heavy. We made a silent pact to take care of each other throughout the journey, to continually check in with each other to make sure that we were OK.”

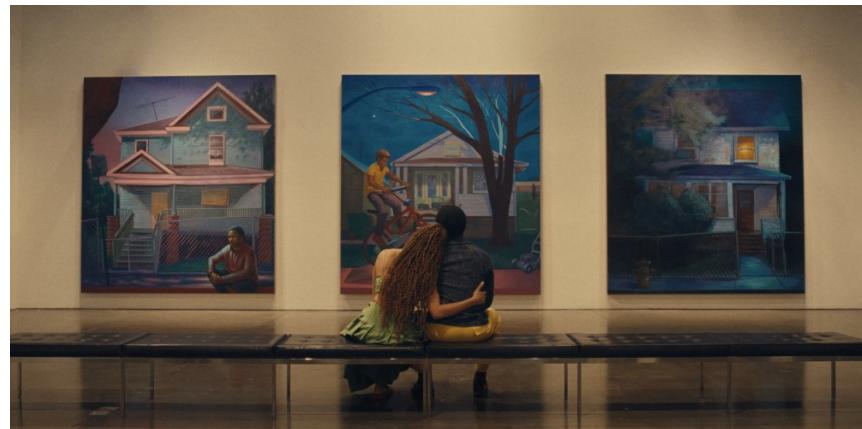
**Read more:** [The 33 Most Anticipated Movies of Fall 2024](#)

Those months together also instilled trust between actor and director. *Exhibiting Forgiveness* is a film packed with intense breakdowns and triggering confrontations. Tarrell is afflicted by post-traumatic nightmares of his father’s violent drug addiction. When he thinks back on the abuse his father doled out on him and his mother, Tarrell is afflicted by post-traumatic nightmares of his father’s violent addiction and fits of rage. In one heartbreakingly moving scene, La’Ron forces a teenage Tarrell to continue mowing a white

woman's lawn even after seeing Tarrell's foot be impaled by a nail. Those nightmares have caused Tarrell to feel a debilitating angst that he'll repeat his father's mistakes with own young son.

Digging up such personal pain understandably took an emotional toll on Kaphar. "Watching André go through what I went through broke me," he recalls. "He made me feel the emotions that I had been suppressing."

Holland channeled his personal struggles too. The actor's own father was facing cancer when he first received Kaphar's script. Holland recorded conversations with his dad that later informed his approach to Tarrell. John Earl Jelks, who plays La'Ron, similarly conjured his relationship with his own dad. The set therefore became a "space for all of our dads to be there with us and to be in communion with all of those spirits," says Holland.



That spirituality exists in every frame of Kaphar's film, especially in the act of painting. It's telling that the only place where Tarrell finds peace—apart from being with his young son and R&B singer wife Aisha ([Andra Day](#))—is in his studio. There, art is not only a meditation. It's also devotional.

Kaphar painted several works for the film, each in different stages of completion to give the impression of Holland actually crafting these pieces. These oils are inspired by Tarrell's on-screen memories, featuring neighborhood scenes of kids jumping fences

and riding bikes, and portraits of other characters. The pieces do not feature the same scenes of radiant angels or images of Christ that typifies some of Kaphar's work. But he still believes that even the film's pieces—which are [being exhibited at the Gagosian Gallery](#) in Los Angeles until Nov. 2—are firmly rooted in his religious upbringing. “The people who love me most in the world are believers. The people who saved me are believers,” explains Kaphar. “Even though my spiritual journey looks a little different than, say, my grandmother and my mom’s spiritual journey, my values are rooted in what those women taught me.”

Perhaps it’s the intentional blending of craft and the divine that makes *Exhibiting Forgiveness* such a clear-eyed critique of absolution’s finite capacity for closure. Because unlike films like *The Green Mile*, [The Color Purple](#), *Soul Food*, the *Best Man* series, *Kingdom Come*, and more, which often hasten [forgiveness](#) to speed toward neat resolutions, *Exhibiting Forgiveness* doesn’t suppose the problems between Tarrell and La’Ron can be waved away by a magic wand. And unlike many of those films, its avoidance of forgiveness as a simple fix in turn avoids shifting the responsibility of the sin away from the sinner to the victim.

**Read more:** [The 100 Best Movies of the Past 10 Decades](#)

In one evocative scene, Tarrell’s mother, Joyce sits with her son on a park bench, pleading with him to forgive La’Ron. She even quotes the Bible—Matthew 6:14-15: “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” Tarrell responds with a biblical story himself, that of God testing Abraham’s faith by demanding he kill his only son Isaac. Tarrell uses the scripture to demonstrate how God’s word can neither be taken wholesale nor be used to mend all wounds.

With roots in Alabama’s Southern Black church, Holland found the charged scene difficult to approach. “I have, I’ll say, a deeply ingrained reverence for the biblical. And by that, I mean, the idea

of saying a cuss word in the same sentence as a Bible verse for me was grounds to get me sent straight to hell,” he explains with a chuckle. “So I was nervous about that.”

Before he even began filming *Exhibiting Forgiveness*, however, Holland was already reflecting on religion. He is presently studying for his Masters in Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School. Since beginning his studies, he’s thought about the origins of religion, how we define it, and the ways several doctrines have changed. “Religion’s been used in a variety of different ways throughout history. It’s been used to inspire folks to do great things, and it’s also been used to justify some pretty horrific things as well. It’s both. I was bound up in that struggle as we were on set. I could not decouple those two things,” says Holland.



For Tarrell’s father, religion is used as a pathway back to his son. The film is smartly slippery on whether La’Ron’s transformation—whereby he sobers up and tries to make amends for his past—is totally genuine. Often in conversations with Tarrell, La’Ron, like Joyce, wields the Bible to demand absolution. But he never takes responsibility for his physical abuse of Tarrell and Joyce or his drug habit. He positions them as character-building obstacles. Because La’Ron doesn’t provide adequate grounds for reconciliation, ultimately, Tarrell is left to do much of the emotional work of moving on. It’s a one-sided, inward turn that

sets up a final meeting between father and son that doesn't necessarily end in catharsis but ambiguity: Does Tarrell forgive his father?

The fresh result of the film's conclusion is to refrain from granting the viewer or the character a neat ending. Kaphar hopes to inspire viewers to inspect the toxic relationships they've carried on for the wrong reasons. "The way that I was taught forgiveness was to turn the other cheek and forgive at all costs. I've done that often to my detriment," explained Holland. "I think that one of the things I learned in the process of doing this film that I'm continuing to learn is forgiveness with boundaries."

And yet, the trick Kaphar manages to pull off is never making La'Ron wholly unlikable. Kaphar crafts the on-screen father as flawed but not evil. That nuance is the result of decades worth of introspection which have led to an uncommon honesty and vulnerability that courses throughout *Exhibiting Forgiveness*. It also allowed Kaphar to come to a life-altering conclusion while making the film.

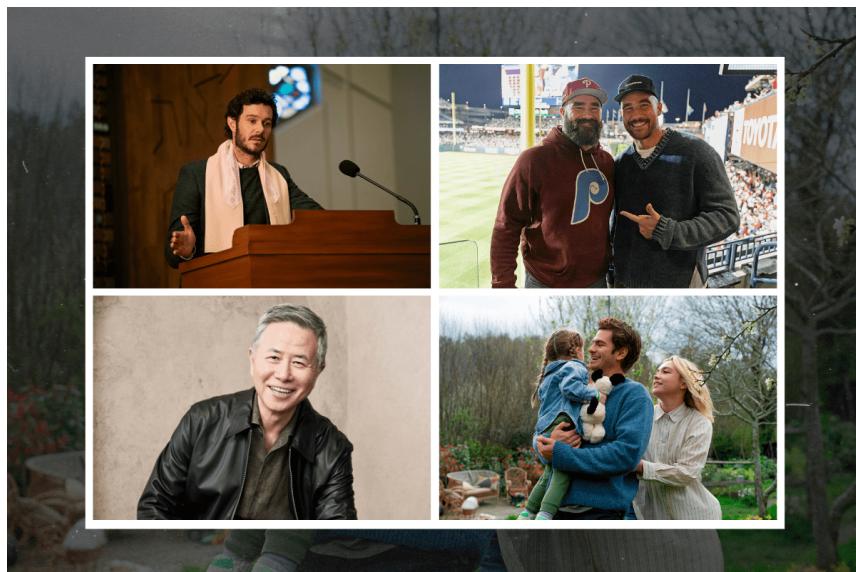
"My father's been struggling for most of my life, and I needed to be honest about that," explains Kaphar. "I can say this now: I still love him. More importantly now, after the process of making this film, I realize that my father is not the villain of my narrative."

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<https://time.com/7094253>

## The Gentle Man Has Taken Over Pop Culture. Will It Matter at the Ballot Box?

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



In [\*We Live in Time\*](#), the romantic drama whose slow October rollout has swept up moviegoers in a tidal wave of tears, [Andrew Garfield](#) plays a divorced man who finds love in a hopeless place. Recovering in the hospital after a distracted stumble into traffic, Garfield's Tobias meets the apologetic woman who struck him with her vehicle: Almut ([Florence Pugh](#)), a talented and fiercely ambitious chef. She becomes the star in their relationship, but he is its tender heart. Tasting her food makes him emotional; he frets about the future and cares for her when she's gravely ill. When she gets pregnant, Tobias takes detailed notes to ensure they're prepared for childbirth.

It's a perfect role for Garfield, a 41-year-old actor who radiates gentleness—and who has [spoken with great eloquence](#) about grieving his mother, who died in 2019. That synergy has been reinforced by a giddily received press tour that has fused the actor's personality with that of his character, as he offers earnest, sometimes tearful insights relevant to the movie's themes: love, death, the power of art to capture both elemental human experiences. He [explained to Sesame Street's Elmo](#) how missing his mom kept her memory alive. While cuddling puppies in a [BuzzFeed video](#), he riffed on the ephemeral nature of life. In a [viral clip](#) from the New York Times' *Modern Love* podcast, he breaks down over a real-life love story. "This is why art is so important," he manages to say. "Because it can get us to places that we can't get to any other way."



Garfield's status as the internet's boyfriend du jour was confirmed by the [anticipation](#) that preceded his Oct. 18 interview on [Amelia Dimoldenberg's](#) YouTube series *Chicken Shop Date*. (The [flirtatiously combative encounter](#) lived up to the hype.) And it echoed the fanfare, just a few weeks earlier, that surrounded an actor who occupies a similar niche: Adam Brody, the star of Netflix's hit rom-com series [Nobody Wants This](#). Brody made his sensitive-guy bones two decades ago as the geek-chic teen Seth Cohen in *The O.C.* His latest character is a "hot rabbi" whose

vocation imbues him with decency and depth. And if the gentleman is this fall's most thirstily embraced leading-man archetype, he's also popping up elsewhere throughout pop culture, from football's Kelce brothers expressing their mutual love on their podcast to the senior singles getting vulnerable in *The Golden Bachelorette*.

It isn't exactly surprising that these exemplars of emotional intelligence are resonating with the overwhelmingly female audience that consumes romance content; their appeal as fantasy fodder, alongside bad boys and men in uniform, is perennial. Yet their ubiquity comes at a significant political moment. As we approach an election that pits a self-possessed woman and her self-effacing male running mate against a ticket that gives voice to alpha-male misogyny, voters of all genders will make a choice between diametrically opposed visions of masculinity. A nation that has never elected a female President is about to find out whether the kind of gentleness so many of us find so attractive can prevail over vitriolic machismo when it counts.



Few topics in the cultural conversation are as fraught as masculinity. This has been the case since 20th century feminists started illuminating gendered injustices—but especially since the #MeToo movement exposed so many powerful men as predators,

from America's dad [Bill Cosby](#) to the urbane interviewer [Charlie Rose](#). Years earlier, the term [nice guy syndrome](#) had emerged to describe men who self-identified as kind and expected women to reward them for it with love and sex. Meanwhile, increased visibility for [queer](#), [trans](#), and [nonbinary](#) identities has challenged gender essentialism writ large.

So clarity is important when we talk about the gentle man as an archetype. He need not be a gentleman in the courtly sense, holding doors for his date or throwing his jacket over puddles so her shoes don't get wet. But, as a character or celebrity marketed as a romantic hero to an audience of women who are attracted to men, he is canonically straight (although queer analogues include characters like [Kit Connor](#)'s considerate bisexual boyfriend, Nick Nelson, in Netflix's [Heartstopper](#)). What he emphatically *isn't* is a calculated nice guy, hoarding sensitivity points to cash in with women. Nor does he make a conspicuous performance of progressive masculinity, à la [Ted Lasso](#) or those dated [Feminist Ryan Gosling memes](#). He may not think much at all about gender, as far as we can tell. (This air of naturalness doesn't, of course, preclude gentleness from being a deliberately constructed persona. If #MeToo taught us anything, it's how little we truly know about the objects of our parasocial adoration.)

Instead of striving to be singled out as a good guy, in an explicitly gendered sense, the gentle man behaves like a sincere, compassionate, introspective person. He talks about his feelings but also knows how to listen. He has likely been to therapy but doesn't drone on self-indulgently about it. Part of the appeal of Brody's *Nobody Wants This* character is his fascination with questions of philosophy and faith, and the pleasure he takes in sharing them with his new girlfriend (Kristen Bell), a prickly agnostic. The sexagenarian men of *The Golden Bachelorette*, like [original Golden Bachelor Gerry Turner](#) before them, are secure enough to cry on camera. Many are widowers. One fan favorite, Charles Ling, finds

that the friendships he forges with male castmates help him move forward, years after the death of his wife.

Unlike his posturing nice-guy and male-chauvinist counterparts, the gentle man has experienced enough hardship to understand that there are more important things in life than being perceived as heroic or tough. Which explains why he's not intimidated to stand beside a powerful woman. [Travis Kelce](#), for all his candor on [New Heights](#), the podcast he co-hosts with brother Jason, has never come off as insecure about being known as the [football-player boyfriend of Taylor Swift](#). On the contrary, he enthuses about "seeing her in her element, killing it up there on stage." In the climactic scene of [We Live in Time](#), Garfield's Tobias literally cheers from the sidelines as his ailing yet resolute wife competes in a prestigious culinary competition.



It's possible to overestimate the connection between representation and reality, the way certain archetypes are portrayed in pop culture and how those portrayals impact society. ([Lean In](#) and [Beyoncé](#) didn't stop us from electing Trump in 2016, with the ultimate result of the [Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade](#).) But we certainly take cues from the things we watch and listen to and scroll past on our phones about how to be in the world.

In that regard, evidence suggests that men are suffering from a dearth of useful information. A new [National Research Group report](#) on “the role of the entertainment industry in tackling America’s masculinity crisis” found that of the top 20 fictional male role models identified by males ages 13 to 30, not one lives in our reality. Instead, respondents cited [Spider-Man](#), [Harry Potter](#), [SpongeBob](#). (Women like superheroes too, but also look up to the likes of Meredith Grey on [Grey's Anatomy](#) and Olivia Benson from [Law& Order: SVU](#).) The study warned that, as they come of age, boys are “trapped between competing visions of masculinity”—unsure of whether to reject machismo or embrace the cartoonish hypermasculinity of proudly toxic influencers like Andrew Tate—and that such uncertainty can lead to underachievement, drug abuse, and ultimately deaths of despair. While participants differed in their attitudes towards masculinity, researchers found that “one specific area where there’s broad agreement among boys and young men is the need for more stories that center on men who are emotionally vulnerable and honest about their feelings.”

The irony is that the male characters they crave already exist; they’re just being marketed to women. In this pivotal election year, however, no demographic can escape the war between conflicting visions of masculinity in the political arena. [Donald Trump](#) and [J.D. Vance](#) prescribe and inhabit antiquated gender roles; their side wants men in the Oval Office, women (with limited reproductive rights) at home raising kids, “[childless cat ladies](#)” ostracized. [Kamala Harris](#)’ running mate, [Tim Walz](#), represents an alternative that closely resembles the gentle guys who’ve taken over our screens. (To be clear: we’re talking about persona. Whether any politician angling to be in line for Commander in Chief can fairly be called gentle is a separate question.) He finds men who fixate on controlling women’s bodies “weird.” Like Travis Kelce, he’s comfortable supporting a woman whose prominence eclipses his own. The *Bachelorette* dad who reminisces about hosting Thanksgiving for his lesbian daughter’s friends echoes the story of

how Walz served as faculty adviser to a gay-straight alliance at the high school where he taught and coached football.

What remains to be seen is whether this gentle form of masculinity and the more assertive sort of femininity with which it coexists can win an election that is also a referendum on gender in America.

[Barack Obama confirmed as much](#) when he lamented, at a campaign rally, that “some men . . . think Trump’s behavior—of bullying people or putting them down—is somehow macho, a sign of strength. I’m telling you, that’s not what real strength is . . . Real strength is about helping those who have less or need some help, standing up for those who can’t always stand up for themselves.” If the entertainment that speaks to us—the characters and personalities some of us swoon over and others clamor to see more of—is any indication, we know this. But if we lose sight of what we really want somewhere between the couch and the polls, well, it wouldn’t be the first time.

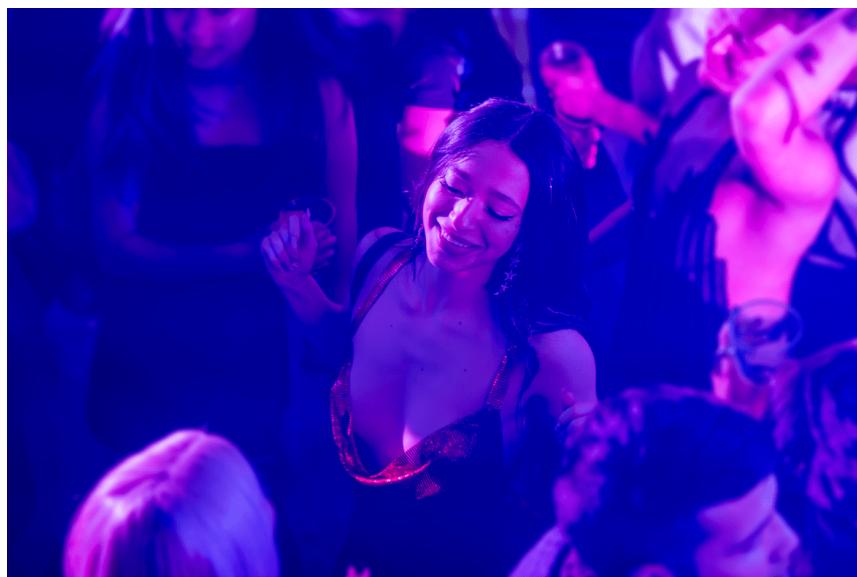
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<https://time.com/7098608>

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## Anora Is a Glorious Strip-Club Fairytale With a Generous Spirit

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



One of Sean Baker's gifts as a filmmaker is that he makes us feel like insiders even in worlds that are likely to be unfamiliar to most of us. Sex workers who look after one another with fierce loyalty become our friends, too. Kids making their own scrappy magic while living in a budget motel on the edge of Walt Disney World ignite our imaginations as well, reminding us what it was like to conjure fun out of nothing, especially when our parents were off doing other things. Baker's new movie *Anora*, playing in competition here in [Cannes](#), invites us into the world of a young sex worker from Brooklyn named Ani—she doesn't like her full name, which is the same as the movie's title, though by the end, it's the only name regal enough to suit her tender, fighting spirit. Ani works in a Manhattan strip club; one night her boss summons her to meet with a client who has asked specifically for a Russian-speaker. Because she's Uzbek-American and used to speak Russian

with her grandmother, she's got the qualifications. And so Ani meets Ivan, the son of a Russian oligarch, a funny, endearing kid—he claims to be 21, but you doubt it—who's as playful as a wolf pup and who tosses hundred-dollar bills around like play money.

That's how *Anora* kicks into gear, but by its end—one of those great movie endings that's both staggering and gentle—Baker will spin us around a few times before showing us the path toward Ani's future. How does he do it? There are few filmmakers as open-hearted, as stone-soup inventive, as Baker is. In movies like *Tangerine* and *The Florida Project*, he's always shown a knack for doing a lot with a little. But with *Anora*, so playful yet so emotionally fine-grained, he maybe does the most. It's his best movie yet.

Ani, played by Mikey Madison (who played Max Fox on *Better Things*, and also appeared as one of the Manson Girls in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*), seems to like her job well enough, or at least she doesn't think to complain about it. At work, she's a friendly, flirty presence—obviously, that's part of the job, but you also see glimmers of her true spirit there. If she's a little guarded by necessity, she's also a great wisecracker; and if she looks a little younger than her age, 23, she can clearly take care of herself. When Ivan (Mark Eydelshteyn) sees her, and realizes he can communicate with her in his broken English, he looks like a shining prince who has located his princess—all for the price of a friendly lap dance.

He asks Ani if she “works outside the club.” Next thing you know, decked out in heels and a stretchy dress, she's at the door of the retro-futuristic Brighton Beach mansionette owned by Ivan's absentee parents. After she's let in by the guard, she buzzes at the front door—Ivan slides along the highly polished living-room floor in his socks, *Risky Business*-style, to answer. They make genial small talk; Ani is the one who has to push the action along. Young Ivan, simultaneously cocky and terrified in a teenage way, finally

takes the hint: “Bedroom. Upstairs. Let’s go!” This is the beginning of a whirlwind romantic adventure, a classic screwball-comedy matchup that’s exhilarating and fun to watch, though you know there’ll eventually be trouble in paradise.

Baker allows us to relish this romance of gamboling youth—its high point is an impulsive Las Vegas marriage, a betrothal of two kids at play—for a generous chunk of the movie. Then he switches everything around, and the story shifts into glorious, spin-art chaos. New characters barge into our reverie: there’s Toros (Baker’s longtime collaborator Karren Karagulian), Ivan’s officious but bumbling godfather, who appears at the behest of Ivan’s parents—they’ve caught wind of their son’s marriage to a “prostitute” and send Toros in to correct what they see as a family disgrace. Garnick (Vache Tovmasyan), is in the unenviable position of being the tough-guy enforcer. And then there’s Igor (Yura Borisov), who’s been asked to come along and provide extra muscle—he seems a little tough until you get a good look at his eyes and see the poetry in there. Ani fights them all off, wildcat-style, as they try to destroy her newfound happiness. She kicks so hard at Garnick she breaks his nose. Igor tries hard to restrain her while also respecting her personal space. We watch as she defends her right to her own romantic bliss, before it slowly dawns on her that the dream she’s been wrapped in, like the Russian-sable coat Ivan has bought her, is a temporal thing that others can strip away.

*Anora* is crazy-good fun, but Baker isn’t just in it for the nutso entropy. I’ve heard some people comparing the film, in its crackpot liveliness, to the work of the Safdie Brothers. But to me, it’s more in league with *Something Wild-* and *Married to the Mob*-era Jonathan Demme. For the space of one movie, at least, it’s as if Demme, with his golden heart, has been restored to us. Baker has that kind of generosity.

And like Demme, he’s wonderful with his actors. Ivan’s character is one of those spoiled rich kids who sets off warning bells that we

willfully ignore. That's because, as Eydelshteyn plays him, he still hasn't crossed the line from ingenuous innocence to pure, manipulative calculation; he's like a junior Czechoslovakian Playboy. Borisov's Igor works gentle, simmering magic in every scene. At one point, as Toros and Garnick hustle Ani along the Coney Island boardwalk in the freezing cold, on the way to fulfill their mission of correcting Ivan's mistake, Igor hands Ani a red scarf he's grabbed from the house, thinking she might be cold. She glares at him—earlier, Toros had used that same scarf to stop her from screaming—before grudgingly accepting it. Even in her anger, even as she'd much rather deck Igor than accept anything he's offering her, she's alive to kindness in the world, and although she doesn't know it yet, to the kindness in him.

Madison is simply wonderful. Every year at Cannes there's one actress who captivates a broad swath of the audience, and this year, that performer seems to be Madison. She plays Ani as a woman in charge, so capable you don't worry about her one bit. And then you start to catch glimmers of her vulnerability, of her embarrassment at having yielded to a false dream. Her spontaneous, resilient smile gives way to something that looks like worry, and it's wrenching. Yet we know Ani will get the happy ending she deserves, even if Baker doesn't hand it to us directly—instead, he points the way to the life Ani will move toward *after* the movie is over, after its final moment of radiant grace. This is one of those endings that leaves you feeling a little bereft. You want to be able to see these characters again, to check in on their hard-earned happiness. But if you can trust any filmmaker, you can trust Baker. He's promised us they'll be OK. And so they will.

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<https://time.com/6980900>

## The U.S. Tasked Deborah Lipstadt With Monitoring Antisemitism. She's Been Busy

Karl 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.



*Deborah Lipstadt came to her job as U.S. Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism with a boatload of credentials and a lifetime of experience. Her authority as a historian of the Holocaust had won not only awards, but also a historic judgment by a U.K. court against David Irving, the Holocaust denier who sued Lipstadt for defamation after she called him one.*

*But on Oct. 7, 2023, the world's focus lurched to a fresh horror, answered by a war that requires, as Lipstadt put it in a recent interview, "that you hold more than one idea in your head at a time." Lipstadt spoke to TIME about how her job is changed and how she sees the reaction to the Israel-Hamas War. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**You are the President's special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism. How's it going?** Business is booming, and I'm the only one in the Administration who wants a recession [in my field].

**Does that mean your job has gotten easier or harder in the past year?** When I came into office, my very first speech talked about the need to get people to take antisemitism seriously. “The Jews have it made! What’s the problem?”—I have less of that now. I hear from people telling their 12-year-old grandson who wears a kippah, “Put on a baseball cap. For safety’s sake.” On the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

**You grew up when Israel was the underdog. Whole generations have known it first as an occupier.** I was there during the Six-Day War. I was a kid, but, you know, we didn’t know what was going to happen. That profile has changed dramatically. At the same time, there is still an intense hatred among many entities surrounding Israel that want to see its demise.

**How can one distinguish between criticizing Israel and being antisemitic?** To hold Jews everywhere responsible for what goes on in Israel is antisemitism. But if criticism of Israel’s policies was antisemitism, the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who are protesting in the streets on a Saturday night would be antisemites.

**Your academic work is centered on the Holocaust. Is hearing what's happening in Gaza described as a genocide triggering in any way?** There’s a definition of genocide. You can say this is a tragedy; many people in Gaza are not supporters of Hamas. You can say the suffering is immense and without a seeming end. But that’s not a genocide.

**Read more:** [The New Antisemitism](#)

**Between what happened in Israel on Oct. 7 and in Gaza afterward, sometimes it can seem like the traumas are in**

**competition.** There certainly are competing traumas. I don't get into competitive suffering. Your two compacted molars doesn't make my one feel better. I don't think it takes you anywhere. We are talking about responding to an attack. The 1,200 dead on Oct. 7 is [as a proportion of the population] like 48,000 Americans. If anybody had said we should sit silently by after 9/11, not respond? If someone hits, you've got to hit them back.

**Did you just say we?** That's right. That's a good point. I was speaking both as an envoy for Joe Biden—who flew there after the attack—and, yes, I speak also as a Jew.

**Do you think Jewish people in general feel as if their fate is attached to Israel's?** I think some Jews do. Some Jews feel that if anything would happen to Israel they would be less safe in the world. There are many Jews who feel that way.

**Does it work the other way? If Israel is delegitimized—a big word inside Israel—are Jews more vulnerable?** I think so. I think in many places, yes. And we also have to think about it. You want to talk about a genocide? Talk about the genocide of the Uighurs.

**That's not happening on camera though, is it?** The Chinese have made sure of that. But if someone were to find a group of Chinese nationals and beat them up [in retaliation], we'd be appalled.

**Rachel Weisz played you in *Denial*, the movie about your being sued for libel by a Holocaust denier. Are you still in touch?** We email. After I got appointed, she told the producers they have to call her ambassador. She took the part really seriously. Her father escaped from Hungary, and her mother was born in Vienna to a Jewish father, and they had to get out. So she came to this quite personally.

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