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TIME

Next Generation Leaders

Nicola Coughlan

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How TIME Chose Its Fall 2024 Class of Next Generation Leaders

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

“There’s no making it,” says Nicola Coughlan. “You just have to keep going and can’t rest on your laurels.” It was at 19, Coughlan tells TIME in our most recent cover story, that she decided to pursue a career in acting. It has taken her nearly two decades to reach her current peak, delivering for Netflix the sixth most watched season of television in the streamer’s history with the most recent installment of Shonda Rhimes’ *Bridgerton*. Coughlan’s persistence and her refusal to accept the status quo represents the spirit of Next Generation Leaders, the series we launched 10 years ago in partnership with Rolex.

Coughlan and the newest 10 other Next Generation Leaders show that leading the future can often mean working to protect and preserve the past. Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke is protecting the rights of the Māori people in New Zealand (“We’re doing everything to revive our culture knowing that it could be extinct”). In the Philippines, Ann and Billie Dumaliang are fighting for land that is home not only to people, but also to hundreds of kinds of animals and plants. And Lenin Tamayo is preserving Quechua and Andean culture. Other leaders are building something new—sometimes literally, as with Maggie Grout, whose organization Thinking Huts is using 3D printing to create schools faster and with less waste generated than with traditional construction, and architect Arine Aprahamian, who is reimagining what kinds of problems her field can help solve.

It’s thrilling to look back at the individuals who have joined Next Generation Leaders across the past decade. Those recognized have come from Afghanistan, Brazil, China, India, Japan, Uganda, and everywhere in between. Each list has been the product of surveying our reporters, editors, and partners around the world to determine who is leading in the sectors that will define the future, with an emphasis on business, climate, sports, the arts, and advocacy.

And the future has indeed been theirs. Before Dua Lipa was on the cover for TIME100, she was a Next Generation Leader. Likewise

climate activist Greta Thunberg, the 2019 Person of the Year. Kylian Mbappé and Simone Biles were NGL cover subjects en route to global super-stardom. In El Salvador, Nayib Bukele joined Next Generation Leaders as a young mayor; today he's one of the world's most closely watched politicians, recently profiled in a TIME cover story.

The list goes on, and so many seem to have embraced Coughlan's insight: the achievements may be many for this group, but there's no resting on their laurels.

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https://time.com/7081321

What Lies Ahead for the Middle East

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

It was one year ago that Hamas militants breached the security barrier separating the Gaza Strip from Israel, initiating a rampage killing 1,200 people and kidnapping 250 in the bloodiest day in the history of the Jewish people since the Holocaust. More dark milestones followed. More than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel began its bombardment of the Strip, "the most devastating urban warfare in the modern record." More women and children were killed in Gaza over the past year than any other conflict over the last two decades, according to a new analysis by Oxfam. Famine, of which there have only been two in the 21st century, is a persistent risk.

In its first months, the conflict restored to the world's consciousness the Palestinians' aspiration to a nation of their own, the nub of their conflict with Israel. In the U.S., public sympathy

toward Palestinians already was growing with revulsion over Israel's 57-year military occupation of Palestinian territories. Now it climbed with the Gaza death toll, particularly among young Americans; global support for Israel soured.

Yet by Oct. 7, 2024, the world's attention was back on Israel's conflict with Iran—the contest that had replaced Palestinians as the fulcrum of the Middle East. Having over 11 months dismantled the military capabilities of one Iranian proxy force, Hamas, Israel in September pivoted to another—Hezbollah, the battle-hardened, heavily armed Shi'ite militia that dominates Lebanon. A lightning Israeli campaign decapitated its charismatic leader, killed more than 2,000 people, according to Lebanese health authorities, and prompted a shaken Iranian regime to launch some 200 missiles toward Israel. Like a similar fusillade from Tehran in April, the main effect of the barrage was to stoke worries that Israel's retaliation would ignite a regional war that drags in the United States, and opens whole new realms of uncertainty.

Whatever comes next, when the dust settles, the Palestinian issue will be waiting. And, in theory, primed for resolution. Resolving it would not only pave the way to Israel's normalization with Saudi Arabia, it would also deprive their shared enemy, Iran, of its excuse

for targeting Israel. The world certainly wants it. If Oct. 7 showed Israeli Jews why they need a country, the retaliation for it generated a global surge in demands for a Palestinian state–the self-determination promised both by the U.N. charter, and by the 1993 Oslo Accords that laid out steps to create one in Gaza and the West Bank, with a capital in East Jerusalem. That plan did not survive the Second Intifada, defined for Israelis by suicide bombings, and for Palestinians by Israeli tanks. But Oct. 7, and what followed, likely shattered whatever remained of trust on both sides.

People may feel “a natural inclination to try to see the light at the end of the tunnel,” says Mairav Zonszein, a senior Israel analyst at the International Crisis Group, based in Tel Aviv. “Unfortunately, I don’t think there is one right now.”

What analysts, and recent history, suggest may lie ahead:

For Gaza, an indefinite Israeli military presence

Since Hamas came to power in Gaza in 2007, the 2 million Palestinians of Gaza had seen five wars, fighting so routine that Israeli officials referred to them as “mowing the grass.” But the Oct. 7 attack both traumatized and enraged Israelis, and 12 months later much of the Strip has been reduced to rubble, with many

inhabitants squeezed into an area smaller than London's Heathrow Airport. Hamas's military capabilities have been severely degraded, according to Brian Carter, the Middle East Portfolio Manager at the American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project, although he notes that it's difficult to assess the state of the organization in the northern part of the Strip, where Israel recently resumed combat.

What happens next? The so-called "day after" plan, in which Gaza could feasibly be rebuilt and its inhabitants return to their homes, remains as elusive as the ceasefire that would return some 100 remaining hostages to Israel and set the stage for a "day after" to come about. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated in a recent interview with TIME his insistence that Israel retain a military presence in the Philadelphi corridor that separates Gaza and neighboring Egypt, which is opposed by Cairo. He has also ruled out the possibility of the Palestinian Authority taking control. Created by the 1993 Accords that were supposed to lead to a Palestinian state, the PA administers only certain parts of the West Bank, which remains under Israeli military occupation. Israel pulled its troops and settlers from Gaza in 2005, though of course its forces are there now.

"Absent a change of policy in Jerusalem, we are sliding into an open-ended occupation of Gaza," says Nimrod Novik, a fellow at the Israel Policy Forum and the former foreign policy advisor to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. "Since we are not going to unilaterally withdraw and leave a vacuum for Hamas to recuperate, then it means that we're going to run Gaza's affairs for an indefinite future."

For the West Bank, dramatic deterioration

Nearly 700 people have been killed in the Israeli-occupied West Bank since Oct. 7, according to the U.N. While the majority of deaths were by Israeli forces, some were also attributed to violent Israeli settlers, whose efforts to displace Palestinians from their land—already spiking under Netanyahu's extremist, pro-settler government—grew all the more brazen during the Gaza war.

"All eyes used to be on Gaza, and now they are on Lebanon. And therefore what's happening in the West Bank goes pretty much under the radar, but it is quite dramatic," Novik says. Indeed, Palestians living in the West Bank told TIME that the recent raids were reminiscent of 2002, when at the height of Second Intifada Israel sent armed columns and began construction of a separation barrier.

"We're going to see the West Bank sliding in a Gaza-like direction," Novik argues, citing, among other factors, rising settler violence and the increasing appeal of armed resistance groups among Palestinian youth, many of whom have no memory of the Second Intifada and embrace the resistance ethos of Hamas. "It has already begun."

In Lebanon, a message to Iran

Iran may be 1,100 miles from Israel, but with Hezbollah—conceived, armed, and partly directed by Tehran—the Islamic Republic has been essentially on its northern doorstep. The day after Oct. 7, it began launching salvos into northern Israel, forcing the evacuation of 60,000 civilians and setting the stage for a war that, in contrast for the conflict in Gaza, Israel had been planning for decades. In the space of two weeks in late September, it disabled Hezbollah's communications network, killed most of its leaders, and bombed a significant portion of a missile arsenal that had been regarded as the gravest threat to Israeli security. When Israeli ground troops crossed the border, it was to secure a Lebanese frontier decorated with monuments to Iran's ruling mullahs.

Israel said the invasion, its fourth, is "limited, localized and targeted." But the 1982 incursion became an occupation that lasted 18 years. "We know from experience, and we know from the specific history of Israel-Lebanon, that they don't ever intend to stay. They don't intend to occupy, but that's what happens," says Zonszein, the Crisis Group analyst**.** "The experience of the last 20 years for Israel has been that they can't rely on anyone else to enforce security in south Lebanon."

But the implications of Hezbollah's sudden and dramatic depletion may prove as consequential as the Oct. 7 attack. Israel's initial success brought "a tectonic shift in the Middle East," Paul Salem of the Middle East Institute wrote on Sept. 30. "The current rout of Hezbollah leaves Iran profoundly vulnerable."

That means a great deal in a region where each country is defined by its attitude toward Tehran. The Islamic Republic has been ascendant for the last two decades— starting with the American removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, where Iran now operates openly, then Tehran's rescue of the Assad regime in Syria, and making clients of the Houthis in Yemen. Hamas was also a client, but Hezbollah was Iran's crown jewel—its missile arsenal deterring Israel from attacking Iran directly. Without it, Salem points out that Tehran may now opt "to build a more powerful deterrent, which would be a nuclear weapon…"

In Israel, global isolation and domestic politics

Israel was profoundly shaken by Oct. 7. The massacre and kidnappings not only summoned the collective vulnerability accumulated across 2,000 years of Jewish history. It also shattered the sense of security that Israel exists to assure. Neither of those things is visible to the outside world, however, and when

international sympathy shifted to the people in Gaza dying under Israeli bombs, many Israelis defaulted to a familiar refrain: “The whole world’s against us.”

What was visible was Benjamin Netanyahu. He had been prime minister longer than anyone in Israel’s history, but his political days appeared to be numbered in the immediate aftermath of Oct. 7, with a majority of Israelis believing should be removed from power. Every decision his government has made since then, from rebuffing international calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state to rejecting ceasefire deals that would bring the hostages home, could be seen through the prism of self-preservation: His right-wing coalition included extremists who threatened to leave if he did either.

“The prime minister is driving decisions on national security based on partisan, personal considerations,” Novik says, referencing recent revelations that Netanyahu had prioritized maintaining Israel’s presence in Gaza over the safety of the hostages. (Netanyahu rejects this characterization, telling TIME in a recent interview: “I’m not concerned with my political preservation.”)

But his party’s improved standing in recent polls is a testament not just to his own political survival; it also reflects the relief Israelis feel at a string of dramatic successes in the security realm, where there’s broad consensus. The gravest early warnings to Hezbollah were read out, after all, by Netanyahu’s main political rival, Benny Gantz, while serving in the war cabinet in December. From the assassination of the leader of Hamas in an Iranian government guest house to the striking early momentum in Lebanon, Israelis sense that “deterrence”—the premise of the nation’s security doctrine, and counted among the casualties of Oct. 7—is being restored.

How long Israel remains on the offensive, especially against Iran

directly, is the question that consumes the globe.

For the United States, a choice

Outside the Middle East, perhaps the single biggest variable that stands to influence where things go next is the U.S. presidential election. Should Kamala Harris succeed Joe Biden, the expectation is that she will likely continue her predecessor's supportive posture towards Israel, albeit perhaps with more sensitivity to the growing public uproar over the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, as well as Washington's own role in perpetuating it. Should Donald Trump be elected, the former president is widely expected to resume his unambiguous backing of Israel, which he said should be allowed to "finish the job" in Gaza.

While the U.S. holds considerable leverage over Israel, most acutely in the form of billions in military aid, the Biden Administration hasn't been seen to use it to secure an as-yet-elusive ceasefire. "The only force that can change that calculation, that can actually impose the real costs on Netanyahu that could change his behavior, is the United States," says Matt Duss, the executive vice president of the Center for International Policy and a former chief foreign policy advisor to Sen. Bernie Sanders, one of the most

vocal proponents of conditioning U.S. aid to Israel. “Biden is refusing to do that.”

Congress, which controls the budget—and where Netanyahu is embraced with particular fervor by Republican lawmakers—also plays a huge role. But foreign policy is made by Presidents, and with the election just a month away, Biden is unlikely to make policy changes in the interim—a reality that could be a boon for Netanyahu. “From now until Nov. 5, he has more free reign than ever, because he knows that the Biden Administration is certainly not going to do anything before the election,” says Yousef Munayyer, a nonresident fellow at the Arab Center in Washington, D.C., and a longtime observer of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Between now and Nov. 5 is when he’ll feel the freest to do what he wants, which makes this a very, very dangerous time.”

More from TIME

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https://time.com/7049499

‘It Feels Like One Single Endless Day’: The Families of Hostages on Life After Oct. 7

A year has passed since Hamas launched the attack on Israel that set the Middle East ablaze. That dreadful day, on which 1,200 people were killed, would come to mark the start of the bloodiest war in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one that would result in more than 40,000 Palestinians killed, according to Gaza health ministry figures that the U.N. and U.S. government consider reliable, and would drag Israel into direct armed conflict with actors in Lebanon, Yemen, and Iran.

It was also the day hundreds of families across Israel and around the world learned the devastating news that their loved ones were either killed or missing, in what would become the largest-scale hostage crisis in the country's history. Since then, of the 251 individuals who were taken into Gaza, 105 hostages have been freed via negotiations with Hamas. Another eight were rescued during daring but deadly operations. At least 35 hostages have also been confirmed dead since the war began, and approximately 100 remain in captivity one year later.

Last year, TIME spoke with over a dozen family members and close friends of those who were kidnapped. Featured on that cover were Jonathan Polin and Rachel Goldberg-Polin, whose son Hersh Goldberg-Polin was abducted at the Nova music festival and whose death was confirmed just over a month ago.

Read more: *Counting the Days With Rachel Goldberg-Polin*

Now, one year later, photographer Michal Chelbin, who created the portraits for that story, visited with three of those families to see how their lives have changed since Oct. 7. Two of the families have been fortunate enough to see their loved ones return home, though the trauma of the last year lingers. One family, whose loved one is believed to remain a hostage in Gaza, is—like so many others—still waiting. These are their words, edited for length and clarity.

Keren Schem

Keren Schem's daughter Mia Schem was kidnapped from the Nova music festival and taken into Gaza. Nine days after her capture, Hamas published a video of her, during which she confirmed her arm had been severely injured and asked to be returned home as quickly as possible. Fifty-five days into her captivity, Mia was freed in a prisoner exchange deal with Hamas.

It's really hard to internalize that a year has passed and there are still hostages in Gaza. There are still families that are in the same situation that I was in for two months. It's something that is impossible to understand.

We still have not returned to normal life because the rehabilitation process is long. She needs to go through more surgeries, and also the emotional recovery. I don't know how many years that will take. And because of the complex reality in Israel, the hostages, war, the soldiers—it's not really possible to recover. Because of the

trauma that Mia went through and that I went through, the triggers are always around. There is no normal life, and life before Oct. 7 is not life after Oct. 7. We still haven't developed a new routine and lifestyle because we are still in the process of recovery.

Life has returned to normal, people returned to work. That's how it is, it's a natural thing. But it's important to understand that 101 hostages are still in the tunnels of Gaza. It's a situation that is unfathomable for the hostages and their families. The world can't continue to go as normal so long as there are still people there.

Read more: *The Families of Israelis Held Hostage by Hamas Speak Out*

Sigi Cohen

Sigi Cohen's son, Elia Cohen, was kidnapped from the Nova music festival. Elia and his girlfriend had initially taken cover once the

attack started, along with 30 other people inside a bomb shelter. However, Hamas militants ultimately found the bomb shelter and began throwing grenades inside, wounding and killing many of those around them.

"The luck of Elia and his girlfriend—I don't know if you can call it luck—was that they were towards the side of the shelter, so all the bodies fell on them," Elia's sister, Yuval Tias, told TIME last year. Elia's girlfriend had said she heard screams, and someone grabbed Elia from the pile of bodies. After, a photo began circulating on the internet of Elia inside a Hamas hospital.

The Israeli army has notified Elia's family that he is believed to be among the remaining hostages.

Sigi recently welcomed a new granddaughter.

The feeling of missing him is impossible to describe. And the fact that so much time has passed and we still don't know anything is frustrating and very painful. Elia is a very happy person who loves life and has many many friends. He went to dance; he was a citizen who didn't do anything. He needs to return home and the world needs to denounce this act and to ask and demand that he and all the hostages return home.

I have faith. I can feel that Elia is alive. He was kidnapped alive and I believe that until now he is still alive. And I have faith that, God willing, he will return to us soon. The faith makes me strong and gives me the hope that he will return to us soon.

This amazing granddaughter that came to us has added so much light to our home, together with a darkness that Elia doesn't know that he has a new niece. Her name is Tuv Orah. The meaning of this name is "Good, light of god." We are asking God, since He has given us such a good thing by bringing our granddaughter into our

lives, that He continues to bring good to our lives and show Elia the path to return home.

Read more: *As the Families of Murdered Hostages, Our Message to People in Power Is Simple: Act*

Yoni Asher and Doron Katz-Asher

Yoni Asher's wife, Doron Katz-Asher, and their two daughters, who were ages 2 and 4 at the time, were kidnapped while visiting Doron's mother in Kibbutz Nir Oz. They remained in captivity for 49 days, before Hamas released the three of them in a prisoner exchange deal.

Doron recently announced that she was pregnant in an Instagram post shortly after the Jewish New Year holiday, according to Israeli media. "To bring life into the world," she wrote in her post, "one

year after I almost lost my own life—is the greatest gift we could have asked for this new year."

Yoni Asher:

I did not imagine that one year after Oct. 7, we would be speaking about hostages that are still there. This is preventing us as a family from fully healing. It's preventing us from starting to get past this trauma. When I see those families still suffering, when I was in their position exactly, it personally makes me feel guilty. When I was in this situation for 49 days, I cannot even imagine their suffering after one year.

It did change how I see my family in a lot of ways. We do not appreciate most of the time what we have: our health, our wellbeing, the fact that we are alive even, and breathing and free. Today I appreciate every second with them, and no matter what happens I am thankful.

Doron Katz-Asher:

From my perspective it feels like it was yesterday, and it's ongoing till today. It feels like one single endless day. It changed me on a personal level and gave me some perspective on what is important in life. It changed the whole family. I appreciate the little day-to-day activities that were taken from me in an instant. Even to drink cold water—the simplest thing that maybe nobody thinks could make someone happy.

In the beginning, we did not use the word "hostage" [with our children] but now Raz [our oldest daughter], talks about it. She says, "They took us hostage, there's hostages in the streets, I want the hostages to return home." She understands the meaning of this.

Yoni Asher:

[The children] are very young. You can’t explain to them the situation the way you would to an adult. But after what they experienced, you can’t hide from them the truth. You need to sympathize with them when they are asking questions and they are curious. Using professionals and our personal instinct as parents, we react to those questions and we sympathize. This is a process, and I am also myself learning to cope with this new situation.

We are all eventually parents, no matter if you are from the United States or France or Britain or Germany or Israel. When you have children, and you are a parent, you share a common subject. I think [of the] over 400 interviews and [media] encounters I did during those 49 days—many people told me [it was] an inspiration for them. When you get those reactions you learn that your voice matters and your voice is important. That is why I’m going to Geneva to the U.N. on Oct. 7 to tell our story.

Doron Katz-Asher:

I just don’t want people to forget. Don’t forget my story, or the stories of the 250 other hostages, and the over a thousand who were killed on that same day. We were taken from our beds. We are human beings. It doesn’t matter who we are or what our opinions are, what religion we are. We are people who were living our lives. We lost our freedom in a single day. And I was lucky enough to be able to return home but today there are still people there who haven’t returned home. Children, the elderly, women.

There will not be an ending until everyone is returned.

—*With reporting and production by Oded Plotnizki.*

More from TIME

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https://time.com/7064824

Mexico’s First Female President Takes Office Amid Deep Challenges and Unknowns

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

Claudia Sheinbaum was sworn in Tuesday as Mexico’s first ever female President and the first Jewish leader in the nation’s more than 200 years of independence.

The 62-year-old former mayor of Mexico City took the oath of office at a historic ceremony at the Legislative Palace of San Lázaro in Mexico City, with First Lady Jill Biden and the leaders of over a dozen mostly Caribbean and Latin American countries in attendance.

Sheinbaum, a lifelong leftist who campaigned on fighting for the poor, begins her six-year term at a time when the nation faces pressing problems, including spiraling organized violence, a slowing economy, and tensions with the United States, Mexico’s

largest trading partner, over a controversial judicial overhaul that critics say will undermine democratic checks and balances.

Shortly after taking her oath, Sheinbaum gave a speech at the National Palace in Mexico City outlining her priorities. “It is a time of transformation, a time for women,” she said in Spanish. In her history-making speech, Sheinbaum recognized “our sisters who from their history managed to move forward and emancipate themselves… and our granddaughters, who dreamed of the possibility that one day, it would not matter whether we were born as women or men, we can realize dreams and desires without our sex determining our destiny.”

Read More: *The Meaning of Mexico’s First Female President*

Sheinbaum will assume her role with a supermajority in Congress, alongside significant control of the country’s courts and military. However, the specter of her predecessor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, known as A.M.L.O., looms large. He leaves office with an approval rating over 70% and a legacy tied to social policies that resonate with many Mexicans. López Obrador, who founded the left-wing Morena party that Sheinbaum represents, was first elected in 2018 and is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term.

One of Sheinbaum’s first major tests will come next month when she presents her administration’s budget. While López Obrador’s welfare and social policies have gained popularity, they have contributed to a ballooning fiscal deficit that Sheinbaum will need to address. Analysts say she may depart from López Obrador’s “hugs not bullets” approach to combating organized crime that also entailed limiting cooperation with U.S. authorities.

“There are real-world reasons to believe Claudia Sheinbaum will take a different, ie better, path on public security than her predecessor, who had his virtues — but not on this issue,” Brian

Winter, the editor-in-chief of Americas Quarterly, wrote in a post on X.

A former climate scientist, Sheinbaum also brings a strong commitment to environmental issues. She shared a Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 for her work with the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and has advocated for sustainable development and renewable energy initiatives. Sheinbaum has pledged to protect Mexico's state-owned oil and power companies while simultaneously promoting a transition toward cleaner energy sources.

Sheinbaum takes office just one month before a tight U.S. election where Mexico and the migrant crisis at the border have taken center stage. Negotiations surrounding the free trade agreement between Mexico, the United States, and Canada are set for renewal in 2026, making the outcome of the U.S. elections pivotal for Sheinbaum's administration. The economic ties between the two nations are profound, with approximately 80% of Mexico's exports coming to the U.S.

—*With reporting by Solcyré Burga/New York*

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https://time.com/7027129

The Unforgettable Frosty Charisma of Maggie Smith

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.

She made imperiousness feel as light and glancing as a chiffon scarf: Maggie Smith, who died on Sept. 27 at age 89, had a sterling, acclaimed career onstage and in the movies long before she began playing chaperone aunties and benevolent boarding-school witches. But she’s one of those rare actors whose second and third acts brought them greater fame than the first. Smith won Oscars in 1969 and 1978, for her roles in, respectively, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and *California Suite*. But she found new ways to use her gifts as the years rolled on, cultivating an air of frosty charisma that audiences loved. If she’s best remembered for playing the peppery assistant headmistress Professor Minerva McGonagall in the *Harry Potter* movies, and the spectacularly deadpan dowager countess

Violet Crawley on *Downton Abbey*, that's a testament to her extraordinary gifts rather than a failure to recognize their scope. Smith, as comfortable with Shakespeare as with pop children's literature, made every movie and TV show she appeared in just that much better. She had the bearing of royalty and the eyes of a comedienne; no actress has been greater at playing characters who love to stir the pot—but gently.

You can lament that too many people know a certain class of great English and Irish actors—from Michael Gambon to Richard Harris to Smith—only from the *Harry Potter* films. But how wonderful that younger audiences got to know them at all! Especially considering how many actors, even terrific ones, scramble for roles in their later years. And is it ever too early to start schooling the youth in the value of dry understatement? In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part Two*, Smith's Professor McGonagall works her magic to bring a set of stone warriors to life: "I've always wanted to use that spell," she says, a flutter of schoolgirl pride in her voice. No wonder the line became a meme—but what's even better is the beat that precedes it. As McGonagall, Smith's face lights up with a flash of surprise; not even she had thought this arcane incantation was going to work. Sometimes a great line is all about the setup, and Smith knew it.

Maybe, too, Harry Potter fans who have taken their hero's inherent curiosity to heart will wonder what Smith was like as a young performer, and investigate further. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, her performance as a Scottish schoolteacher who fills her students' heads with dreams—even as her own blind spots include a fascination with fascism—is a quiet, shimmering marvel. As Miss Brodie greets "her girls" on the first day of class, she exhorts one new student to tell a little bit about herself. As the girl prattles on about her success as a Girl Guide, adept at tying knots, Brodie interrupts deftly: "For those who like that sort of thing, that is the sort of thing they like." Her delivery has both the dryness of an ancient dinosaur bone and the sparkle of Champagne. This isn't just smart, graceful acting; it's the sort of thing that makes you bow down in wonder.

Smith used her gifts to the fullest across numerous career transitions. In Neil Simon's *California Suite*, she's wickedly sublime as Diana Barrie, a snooty English actress who's been nominated for an Academy Award for her role in a dumb comedy—and who, though she initially pretends not to care, is crushed when she loses. Smith's performance shifts from comedy to plaintiveness with the subtlety of leaves rustling in the autumn light. When

Diana confronts her husband, played by Michael Caine, accusing him of not loving her enough (he's gay, and this not-so-secret secret is part of the dynamic of their marriage), he reassures her in the best and most honest way he knows how: "I love you my angel, more than any woman I've ever known." She replies with a wisecrack that seems to radiate from her very soul: "Christ. I can't get a break." Diana is a woman who knows what's what. And still, with a single line, Smith shows us what it means to want something you know in your heart is not for you to have.

The list of Smith's movie performances, big and small, is far too long to summarize adequately. She played Desdemona opposite Laurence Olivier's Othello; the two would show up together again years later in the Saturday-afternoon fantasy extravaganza *Clash of the Titans*, with Smith as the goddess Thetis. She played bit roles in Agatha Christie adaptations like *Death on the Nile* and *Evil Under the Sun*; seeing her turn up was always a delight. She played dignified aunties in movies like *Washington Square*, *A Room with a View*, and *Gosford Park*, though nothing Smith ever did was mechanical. Every role she took on had a bright, distinctive spark. And though most people are less likely be familiar with her stage performances, you can get some idea of her genius by having a look at *Bed Among the Lentils*, the Alan Bennett monologue she performed as part of the playwright's BBC Television series Talking Heads in 1987.

All those Maggie Smiths combined would have been plenty. But in 2010, she took on a role that would exponentially increase her fame. Like McGonagall, Smith's Violet Crawley became a bounteous source of memes. Even those who have never watched an episode of *Downton Abbey*—or either of the two movie spinoffs—are probably familiar with Smith's delivery of the line, "What is a weekend?" as gloriously arch as the most magnificent flying buttress known to mankind. The character of Violet Crawley allowed Smith to gather her numerous gifts and have some fun with them: we could marvel at her imperial carriage (who would believe she stood only 5'5"?), her mastery of the withering glare, her knack for handling a cutting observation, pinkie up, as if it were the most delicate porcelain vessel. There's no need for Smith's longtime fans—even for those who have loved her since the 1960s—to tut-tut about the fact that her later roles brought her the greatest fame. Think, instead, of how she received those late-career blessings and, as if by magic, scattered them back at us, purely for our enjoyment.

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https://time.com/7026003

Pete Rose, Baseball’s Banned Legend, Dies at 83

Sean Gregory is a senior sports correspondent at TIME. His work has been cited in the annual Best American Sports Writing anthology nine times. His stories have won awards from the U.S. Basketball Writers Association, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, and his work was named a finalist for Deadline Club and Mirror awards for excellence in magazine writing and reporting on media, respectively.

LeBron James broke the NBA’s all-time scoring record back in February of 2023, surpassing Kareem Abdul-Jabbar on the all-time list: James now has 40,747 points and counting.

Imagine, less than a handful a years from now, LeBron was banned from basketball for life.

It’s ludicrous.

Lionel Messi has scored 841 goals for club and country, while captivating America with his exploits upon arrival in Miami last

summer. He’s won a World Cup, a pair of Copa América’s and double-digit league championships.

Imagine that by 2028, Messi was gone from his game.

Also unimaginable. But for the generations who did not grow up in the era of Pete Rose, baseball’s all-time hits leader who died, at 83, on Monday, the Clark County (Nev.) Medical Examiner’s Officer confirmed to TIME, it’s perhaps some helpful perspective. Rose’s 1985 ascendance past Ty Cobb on the career hit list, at a time when baseball—much like basketball and soccer today—produced players and moments that permeated American culture, probably generated more awe and mass reflection than even James’ passing of Abdul-Jabbar in points.

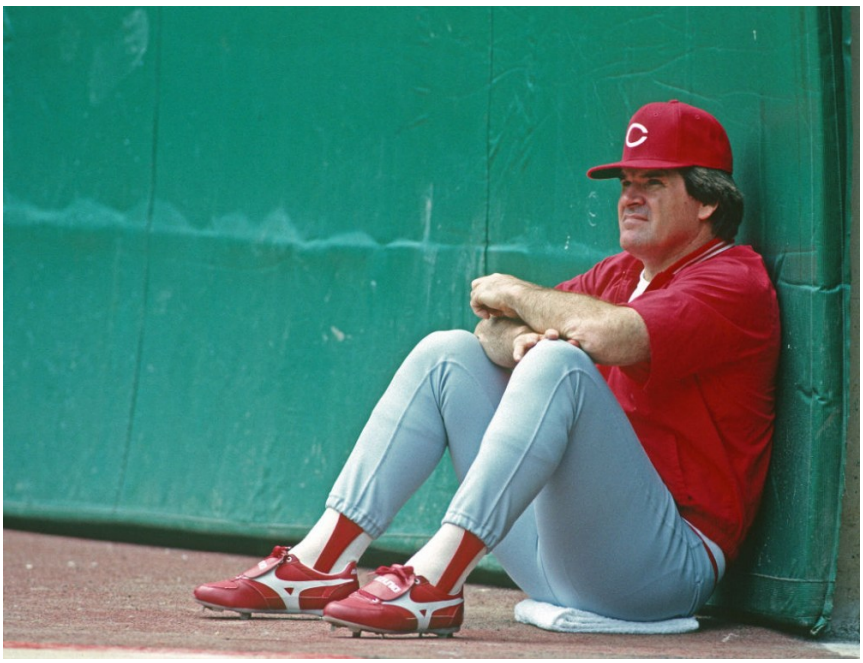
Which made Rose’s downfall, due to a betting scandal that drove the news cycle—such as it was back in the summer of 1989—that much more monumental. Rose’s gambling got him banned from baseball for life that year. And despite so many fits and starts over the years, he never really got back in.

For years after the 1989 investigation that found that Rose, while playing for and managing the Cincinnati Reds, had placed bets on baseball, he denied ever doing so. He and former commissioner A. Bartlett Giamatti signed a deal in which Rose agreed to the lifetime

ban, in exchange for Major League Baseball declining to make a formal determination on whether or not he gambled on the game. Giamatti died on Sept. 1, 1989, a week after the deal was struck. Rose also spent five months in prison after pleading to tax evasion charges in 1990.

Rose finally admitted to betting on baseball as manager in his 2004 autobiography, though he denied ever betting against the Reds and manipulating the outcome of a game. But his lies ultimately kept him out of the Hall of Fame, still a sore spot for baseball fans who believe a player's on-field accomplishments alone deserve recognition. In 2015, Rose made a request for reinstatement: MLB commissioner Rob Manfred turned him down, after Rose claimed he couldn't remember investigative evidence pointing to his betting as a player in 1985 and 1986, years when Rose was a player-manager for the Reds. "Mr. Rose's public and private comments … provide me with little confidence that he has a mature understanding of his wrongful conduct, that he has accepted full responsibility for it, or that he understands the damage he has caused," Manfred wrote.

Betting was a cardinal sin in baseball ever since the Black Sox scandal of 1919, when Chicago White Sox players like "Shoeless" Joe Jackson were accused of fixing games in return for payments. Today, sports gambling pervades baseball and other leagues: FanDuel, for example, is an official sports betting partner of Major League Baseball. Yet, although American sport has embraced gambling, Rule 21 still holds in baseball: "Any player, umpire or club or league official or employee who shall bet any sum whatsoever upon any baseball game in connection with which the bettor has a duty to perform shall be declared permanently ineligible." A fan can bet on baseball where it's legal. A person in Rose's position couldn't do it then, and can't now.



The last three-plus decades were a cruel final chapter for a man who breathed baseball. “I’d walk through hell in a gasoline suit to play baseball,” he once said. Growing up in Cincinnati, Rose had no backup plan: he was going to be a pro ballplayer. That he made it for his hometown team only added to his allure. Rose was the MLB Rookie of the Year in 1963 and he won three World Series titles, back-to-back championships with Cincinnati’s “Big Red Machine” in 1975-76 and another while playing first base for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1980. He played for 24 seasons, and is also baseball’s all-time leader in at-bats and games played.

During his 1973 MVP season, when he played left field for the Reds, Rose had a career-high 230 hits, and topped the National League with a .338 batting average. His aggressive style of play—the head first slides, the sprinting to first base on walks—earned him the nickname “Charlie Hustle.” He barrelled over Cleveland catcher Ray Fosse during a home-plate collision at the 1970 All-Star Game, separating and fracturing Fosse’s shoulder. No matter that the All-Star game was a meaningless exhibition. Rose never apologized to Fosse, whose career was never the same, for the incident.

Post-baseball, Rose made a living in Las Vegas signing autographs. News of his death broke around the time both the New York Mets and Atlanta Braves were celebrating clinching playoff spots, together, at Truist Park in Atlanta. New York's thrilling 8-7 victory over Atlanta in the first game of a doubleheader, which needed to be played to make up games postponed due to Hurricane Helene last week, sent the Mets to the playoffs. Then the Braves won the second game, also securing a postseason spot.

It was a celebratory day for America's pastime, saddened by the passing of an all-time great who, if not for stubbornness and sins, deserved a celebration of his own.

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https://time.com/7027058

A New Zealand City Could Soon Have a Sky-High Solution for Congestion

As cities around the world grapple with congestion and seek to lower emissions, one New Zealand-based startup is looking upward for solutions. Next year, Whoosh will begin construction on a gondola-like ride-hailing network in a 370-acre area of tourism hot spot Queenstown—the first of its kind.

Whoosh resembles a ski lift, descending for passenger pickup, but operates differently. While gondolas transport lifts by moving the entire cableway, each Whoosh cabin uses an electric motor to propel itself along a stationary network of cables and rails at an average speed of about 26 m.p.h.

Powering the cabins themselves means the guideway can be “really simple, low-cost infrastructure,” Whoosh CEO Chris Allington says. The pods have a mechanism that allows them to switch from cables to suspended rails at speed, meaning that, unlike a gondola, Whoosh can take flexible routes from pickup to drop-off without stopping.

Whoosh says its vehicles, expected to be up and running as part of the pilot scheme by 2027, could help reduce travel times and are

twice as efficient as the most economical electric cars. Users will be able to hail rides on demand using an app or ticket-vending machines.

Queenstown is the ideal testing ground “because it’s got horrendous traffic,” but it’s at a manageable scale, Allington says. If the network were expanded across the city, it would have the capacity to take about “20% of vehicles off the road,” he says.

Read more: *How Cities Are Clamping Down on Traffic to Help Fight Emissions*

Each cabin will be complete with a stabilization system that smooths rides in windy conditions, and smart-glass windows can frost over to stop riders from peering into homes as they glide past, Allington says. While providers will ultimately set the cost for riders, Allington says that he expects it to be more expensive than mass transit but cheaper than an Uber.

Allington says the cabins are more energy efficient than other vehicles because, by using a dedicated guideway, they avoid energy–wasting actions like braking or idling in traffic. Whoosh says it uses roughly one-sixth the energy of a U.S. bus or rail system. A one-hour ride uses “about the same amount of energy as having a 10-minute shower,” Allington says. And the infrastructure the pods glide across has roughly a fifth of the embodied carbon—the total emissions associated with materials and construction—of ground-level rail networks, Whoosh says.

Of course, the scheme remains untested, and many a futuristic transport idea has fizzled in implementation. But the company already has its sights set on the U.S. Five North Texas cities—Dallas, Plano, Arlington, Frisco, and DeSoto—are being considered for potential sites of Whoosh’s first U.S. installation, says its U.S. partner and Google spin-off, Swyft Cities, which is in talks with

public- and private-sector customers. “It’s places that are fast-growing, typically were built around the auto, and now, they realize they’re stuck,” says Swyft Cities CEO Jeral Poskey. Part of what makes Whoosh a compelling option, he says, is that it can be “retrofitted into cities,” with its modular infrastructure, allowing it to start small and grow over time.

Read More: *From Scooters to Microtransit, Cities Are Embracing Alternatives to Short Car Trips*

“Turns out, none of the high-tech innovations that fly or drive themselves or go through tunnels are really designed to solve the problem that most of the world is facing,” Poskey says. Subways cater to high-density centers, while cars, including autonomous vehicles, suit low-density urban sprawl. Whoosh, which targets trips of 1 to 5 miles, offers a solution for those in the middle ground, he says. “We find that people want to live in medium-density areas,” Poskey says, but “they just aren’t well supported by either automobiles or mass transit.”

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https://time.com/7094115

Hurricane Helene’s Devastation Through One Photographer’s Eyes

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.

It was surely just a coincidence that the small town of Marshall, N.C. lies less than 20 miles southeast of the even smaller town of Hurricane, N.C. For generations, the Hurricane name didn’t mean much, but all of that changed on Friday, Sept. 27, when an actual hurricane—Hurricane Helene—slammed into North Carolina’s mountain west, pounding 29 counties and a sprawl of communities, including Asheville, Hickory, and Marshall.

Photographer and filmmaker Jack Sorokin was nowhere near Marshall when Helene roared in. He was 735 miles away, at home in Brooklyn, N.Y., but his roots were sunk deep in the Carolina soil. He lived in Marshall from 2016 to 2022 and his mother still lives there, a former partner in the Flow art gallery in Marshall’s downtown and a leaseholder on a studio space on a small island in

the French Broad River, which runs through the town. Sorokin was following the storm as it approached, both on the news and by phone with his mother, who sent him a video showing the town beginning to flood and a car being swept down a street.

“I knew this was going to be catastrophic,” he says. “After that, I lost communication with my mom, which made me even more anxious.”

Sorokin set to work, ordering gas cans and other emergency supplies and raising $6,500 for personal protective equipment for the people of Marshall, who were being inundated by mud—some of which, Sorokin worried, could be contaminated by sewage and runoff from upstream. He expected to make a trip as soon as it was safe to travel, setting out for Marshall after the weekend, but by Monday he heard back from his mother who had survived the worst of the storm, easing the urgency a bit. He finally left New York on Wednesday, Oct. 2, beginning a drive to Marshall that took an unusually long 20 hours, partly because he was stopping periodically to pick up the PPE and other supplies. But there was also a three-hour standstill in traffic caused by a tractor trailer that had driven into a ditch on a road that usually does not permit vehicles so big, but made an exception because that was the only way into or out of the area in the wake of the storm. By now Helene had passed and Sorokin describes his approach to Marshall as nothing short of eerie.

“Familiar places looked normal,” he says. “People were mowing their lawns, and the landscape was as beautiful as ever. But there was an endless line of cars where there are usually just a few trucks. There were some trees down, an occasional mudslide, but for the most part, things seemed untouched.”

All that changed when he arrived in Marshall’s little downtown: “The devastation was shocking. Every building’s first floor was completely destroyed. Mud covered everything. Objects were displaced everywhere. Electrical lines were down. The contrast between just a half mile away, where life seemed normal, and downtown, where it looked like the entire town had been ripped apart, was staggering. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

But if there was ruin, there was also hope. Even before Sorokin arrived, six days after the storm hit, the town of 800 people had mobilized. Locals donated machinery, tools, and, most important, their time, to help in the clean-up—shoveling away the potentially toxic sludge, clearing fast-spreading mold, repairing damage to buildings.

“My friend Amos, one of the citizen organizers for downtown, told me how he’ll ask for a couple thousand dollars to buy machinery we need the next day, and within moments, some person he doesn’t

know has donated it," says Sorokin. "The generosity has been incredible."

A town so small is worth an investment so big. Marshall punches above its weight, drawing in tourists who come to the area for the mountains but visit the community for the arts scene. Even as the Marshall residents struggle to rebuild—getting by on bottled water; placing their orders for drywall, timber, flooring, and more; awaiting FEMA's assessment and applying to the agency for assistance—they flinch at social media commentary arguing that a town whose principal industry is the arts is not worth the investment.

"It's upsetting to hear people downplay the importance of cleaning up the artist studios," Sorokin says. "Artists are a crucial part of this community and of western North Carolina. Saving their spaces and making sure they can continue to create here is vital for the town's future."

That will take work the people of Marshall can't do on their own. North Carolina's western mountains were once seen as a climate haven—safely inland and elevated—but that idea washed away in the Helene rains. If the town is going to survive it will need levees, sewer upgrades, and other infrastructure improvements that only the government can provide. And the clock is ticking. Sorokin and others worry that an unrestored Marshall could easily be bulldozed into a park or a greenspace. The community may be just a dot on the state map, but it's a rich and pretty dot—one that the locals are struggling mightily to save. Below are Sorokin's images of the state of the community and the work to rebuild.

ZUMA

EXIT

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https://time.com/7085892

Angelina Jolie: In the World's Worst Humanitarian Crisis, Acknowledge Who's Actually Helping

Jolie, a TIME contributing editor, is an Academy Award–winning actor and humanitarian

At the annual gathering of the United Nations General Assembly last week, when the subject was briefly Sudan, the U.S. ambassador opened her remarks by citing "compassion collapse," defined as the human tendency to turn away from mass suffering. The suffering in Sudan is certainly on a mass scale. Eleven million people have fled their homes, pursued by men with guns and followed by famine. More than half of the country's population of 46 million is experiencing acute hunger, and three-quarters of a million people face starvation. Sudan is the worst humanitarian situation in the world, and with the international appeal for funds short by 60 percent, governments are not rising to it.

But people are. On the Sudanese border a few days ago, I saw volunteers doing more with next to nothing than those who have the ability to make the biggest impact. Hafiz Issak Aroun, a

Chadian doctor, had resigned his job at a hospital to set up a clinic in the border town of Adré, treating refugees for free. “We are all volunteers here,” he said, “and we’re desperate for support to keep this going.”

Neighbors bring food and volunteer farmland. In Khartoum, neighborhood mutual-aid groups known as Emergency Response Rooms operate 350 communal kitchens. They know the value of living a life of service and grace, of adding to the lives of those around you.

Local responders do not see mass suffering but rather the needs of the person in front of them. Local volunteers, who include refugees themselves, are doing the work that the outside world says should be done, and often better than any outsider could. But they struggle to do it without the support that wealthier countries can provide—in funds free of red tape, through reliable communications, with the diplomatic pressure essential to protecting humanitarian workers, and by keeping open the portals through which aid moves.

We need to adjust**.** Research shows that local groups are faster and more efficient in getting aid to those who need it. To make this happen, donors and relief agencies need to change the way they do business. The shift will need to be dramatic and draw on lessons and models for financing in sectors like global public health.

It’s not just Sudan. In country after country, I have seen the current international system fail people in need. I could no longer tell people to look only to the international community as the answer. I wanted to learn more about what was blocking refugees and the internally displaced from helping themselves. One answer is funding; mutual aid groups this year have only received about 5% of resources allocated from the $130 million Sudan Humanitarian Pooled Fund**.** Eight years ago, a humanitarian ‘Grand Bargain’ set a target of directing, by 2020, at least a quarter of all international

humanitarian assistance through local and national actors. In 2022, it was less than three percent.

Behind the question of money is another question, of respect.

I have lived a privileged life, walked in many worlds. I have worked alongside heads of state, collaborated with great artists, met with kings and queens. The people I have been most humbled by, the people I've learned the most from, were displaced families fleeing war and persecution. No one knows better, or has more grace, than the person who has survived the loss of family and country. They are who I hold in highest esteem. No one knows what it is to be stripped of everything and take that next step forward more than a refugee.

On the border of Sudan, where 200 people cross every day, I found myself standing face to face with a mother who had just walked two weeks with a baby on her back and three young children at her feet. Their father had been murdered in their home, which was then looted and burnt to the ground. That mother was still smiling at her child. To give him some light in the dark. She will live every moment trying to ease her children's suffering and yet offered to pray for my children to have health—and she meant it. I can't tell you now how many times I've sat in a tent and been offered part of that very small ration a family was storing. It's not about the food, it's their common decency. Prayers for the health of a person's family are among the sincerest gifts we can give one another.

Our task must be to make that gift possible—first by funding and enabling local responders. After visiting the border, I met with The Mutual Aid Sudan Coalition, which matches funding to the needs of local aid groups, rather than asking those groups to adapt to a global relief apparatus**.** But they must be able to save lives without risking their own. Not long ago, the killing of humanitarian workers produced outraged headlines. It has grown almost routine because it has been allowed to; neither states nor armed groups

expect to face consequences. When justice is not served equally and without exceptions, it is not justice.

High-minded statements are just words if no one acts on them. The U.N. was founded to prevent war. When it fails at that, an international system that cannot even tend to those fleeing a conflict must, at a bare minimum, protect the local people who do step up**.** It's happening not only on Chad's overwhelmed border with Sudan, but in conflict zones across the world—anywhere that social solidarity summons the spirit Sudanese call *nafeer,* "collective action." We can marvel at what they do with almost nothing. Or we can step up and make necessary changes to how we respond.

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https://time.com/7034724

Hurricane Helene and the ‘Known Unknown’ of Climate Costs

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

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Hurricane Helene is a significant human tragedy with more than 200 deaths reported as of Oct. 4. Thousands more have been left homeless, with North Carolina hit particularly hard. And the property damage will be difficult for the thousands of homeowners to manage without adequate flood insurance.

Estimates of the economic damage vary. Moody’s initially put the price tag as high as $34 billion. Others, which take into account lost economic output, say the toll could top $100 billion. Despite the magnitude of these numbers, it’s easy to let them go in one ear and out of the other. After all, historically a mix of government

institutions and insurance companies have absorbed the cost of a few of these disasters every year, paying out to rebuild.

But past results are not necessarily indicative of future outcomes. As the number of billion-dollar disasters rises as a result of climate change, the economic toll of extreme weather will be increasingly difficult to absorb. Governments may hesitate to pay yet another disaster relief bill and insurers will likely continue to drop coverage in vulnerable areas.

The result is a grim reality: many communities, individuals, and companies are susceptible to climate-driven economic tumult. This is a "known unknown." We know it's going to happen; it's just a matter of when, and, to some degree, where these challenges will hit. When they do hit, investors, businesses, and individuals will want to ensure that they're not left holding the bag.

To understand the known unknowns of climate risk, it's helpful to look at the numbers. In 2023, climate-related disasters cost the U.S. about 0.4% of GDP, according to a report from reinsurance giant Swiss RE. As the effects of climate change become more prevalent, those costs are only expected to grow.

This cost represents a drag on economic growth that affects every corner of the economy, but not every community, company, or firm will be equally hit. Repeated disasters in one area may result in a dramatic spike in insurance prices for the local community or for insurers to pull out altogether. In either case, residents may choose to leave an area, driving down asset prices and depressing the local economy. Local firms will be affected directly and indirectly.

A 2023 study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research looks at the effect of climate events on counties across the country. Severe storms, the study found, lead to a capital depreciation shock that drives down the value of local assets. Meanwhile, heat waves lead to a negative productivity shock that

contributes to lower output. Both contribute to localized economic stagnation in the long-term.

Some of this may already be reflected in the price of assets, but much of it likely isn't. After all, it's hard to know when, where, and how extreme weather events will play out—even if we have a general understanding of the contours of a climate-driven downturn. This is a reality that insurance companies and asset managers have been grappling with for years now. "The degree of capital reallocation and the speed of that is going to be larger and happen more quickly than most market participants expect," Brian Deese told me in 2020 when he was the head of sustainable investing at BlackRock.

At a national level, the most important solution to climate risk is to cut the emissions that are causing the problem. But with significant warming—and resulting climate disasters—already baked in, governments also need to double down on adaptation. Swiss RE says that one dollar invested in adaptation can save $11 in avoided climate disaster down the road.

With those figures in mind, it would be foolish to wait for the government to get to work on adaptation. Companies can look at ways to harden their physical infrastructure where it works—and, in some cases, to move to safer locations. Investors, too, can help nudge portfolio companies and assets to adapt. And anyone located in a risky area should have appropriate insurance—at least for as long as they can get it.

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https://time.com/7049250

How Democrats Lost Ground on Voter Registrations Where It Matters Most

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.

Kamala Harris may be leading Donald Trump in many national polls, but a look under the hood at Democrats' operations tells a less rosy story for the party. A new TIME analysis of voter registration data in four pivotal states finds reasons for Democrats to worry and Republicans to puff up their chests. The data suggest that Democrats in the Biden era may have frittered away advantages in states they need to win.

In the four swing states that make it easy to track political alignment in voter registrations—Arizona, Nevada, North Carolina

and Pennsylvania—Democrats have seen their slice of the overall pie shrink.

In must-win Pennsylvania, Democrats have their slimmest voter registration advantage in decades. In the last four years, Democratic registrations in the state have gone from a safe seven-point advantage to now hanging ahead by fewer than four points. Polling in the state shows Harris leading Trump by a lonely point while the Democratic Senate nominee runs ahead by five. Biden carried it by just 1 percentage point in 2020. (But it's worth noting: in the wake of Biden's exit, Pennsylvania Democrats saw their best week of new voter registrations since 2023. It has, however, leveled off.)

In Arizona, Democrats have lost more than 2 points of their ground against Republicans from four years ago among registered voters. Republicans' gains have been admittedly negligible. But the big tell here is the surge in people registered to vote since 2020: a solid 5% gain in the voter rolls between Aug. 4, 2020, and July 30, 2024, with more of those new voters registering with the GOP. That fundamentally remakes the campaign universe in a state that was always a stretch for Democrats. Polling shop FiveThirtyEight has Trump up by more than 1 point in their aggregate of surveys while the Democrat running for the Senate seat is up by 7 points. Biden carried it by less than half a percentage point, making him only the third Democratic nominee since Harry Truman in 1948 to prevail there.

It's a similar mismatch in Nevada, a relatively small prize in a race that will be dictated by smaller margins. Since 2020, there's been a 22% jump in registered voters. But Democrats have not kept pace, losing 4% of their share of registered voters, while Republicans picked up 8%, as of Oct. 1. What was a six-point advantage for Democrats four years ago is now shaved to two. Harris is polling up by one point, while the Democrat seeking re-election to the

Senate is ahead by nine points. Biden carried the state by less than 3 points.

Finally, in North Carolina, both parties have seen mild shrinkage in their share of the electorate. Overall, voter registration in that state is up by 5% since 2020. But four years ago, Democrats had about six points of advantage over Republicans, 36% to 30% at this point in October heading toward a Biden loss by just a shade more than 1 percentage point. Now, Republicans have quietly narrowed that registration advantage for Democrats to a 31%-30% split. (This comes from data collected before Hurricane Helene wrecked the western side of the state. At this point, it's impossible to tell which side will have the advantage as many voters struggle with shelter and basic necessities.)

Strategists in both parties say that Biden's decision to insist for so long that he was running for a second term is a major reason Democrats have lost ground in voter registrations. Few things help engage a party's base better than a competitive presidential primary season. Donald Trump's bid for the GOP nomination for a third time drew a small but intense protest bloc for former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley. Meanwhile, Biden's renomination was treated as a given, so much so that Democrats in some states made it tough for anyone else to get on the ballot. In other states, they canceled the primary altogether, as is the norm when an incumbent President is seeking a second term. But as a result, Democrats were slower to engage and left many important voters idle until July, when Biden ended his bid and ceded the nomination to Vice President Kamala Harris.

At the same time, Republicans had more well-funded, high-stakes primaries for Senate and gubernatorial seats, further boosting turnout.

In their defense, Democrats are quick to point out voter registration trends are not conclusive. In states that allow voters to register with

a party, a shockingly high number of voters choose not to register with either party. In fact, non-affiliated or independent voters are the largest chunk of the registered electorate—but were the smallest of the slices when it came to actually voting in 2020. Exit polls suggest they broke for Biden 54%-41%.

While all that may reassure some Democrats, the loss of ground among voters registered with their party in four pivotal states remains a source of anxiety. Hurricanes may be injecting new elements of uncertainty in this already wild election cycle, but over the last four years, there have been a whole lot of quieter shifts in this electorate that could prove to be even more impactful.

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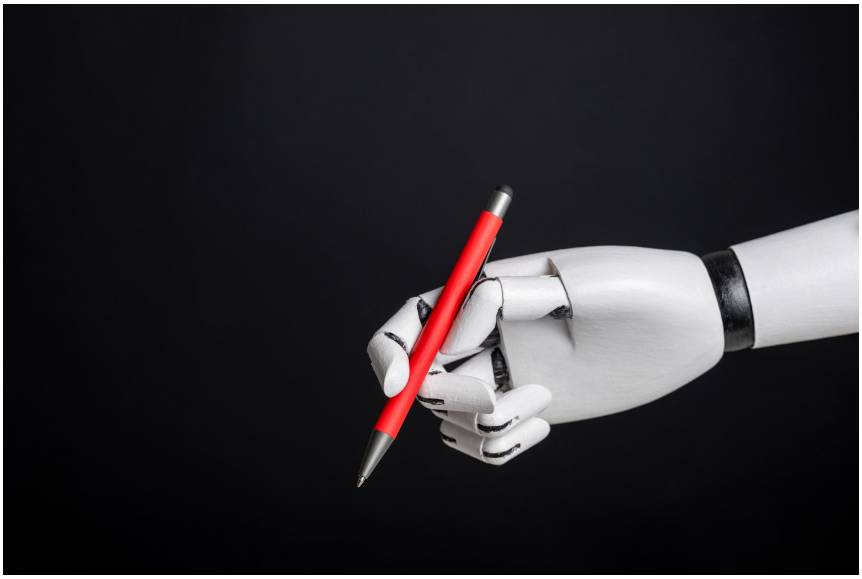
https://time.com/7071878

I Quit Teaching Because of ChatGPT

Livingstone is a writer, educator, and editor. She holds a doctorate in Hispanic literature, was a Fulbright scholar in Brazil, and is currently the managing editor of *MLN*, a peer-reviewed journal of literary scholarship.



This fall is the first in nearly 20 years that I am not returning to the classroom. For most of my career, I taught writing, literature, and language, primarily to university students. I quit, in large part, because of large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT.

Virtually all experienced scholars know that writing, as historian Lynn Hunt has argued, is “not the transcription of thoughts already consciously present in [the writer’s] mind.” Rather, writing is a process closely tied to thinking. In graduate school, I spent months trying to fit pieces of my dissertation together in my mind and eventually found I could solve the puzzle only through writing. Writing is hard work. It is sometimes frightening. With the easy temptation of AI, many—possibly most—of my students were no longer willing to push through discomfort.

In my most recent job, I taught academic writing to doctoral students at a technical college. My graduate students, many of whom were computer scientists, understood the mechanisms of generative AI better than I do. They recognized LLMs as unreliable research tools that hallucinate and invent citations. They acknowledged the environmental impact and ethical problems of the technology. They knew that models are trained on existing data and therefore cannot produce novel research. However, that knowledge did not stop my students from relying heavily on generative AI. Several students admitted to drafting their research in note form and asking ChatGPT to write their articles.

Read More: *Regulating AI Is Easier Than You Think*

As an experienced teacher, I am familiar with pedagogical best practices. I scaffolded assignments. I researched ways to incorporate generative AI in my lesson plans, and I designed activities to draw attention to its limitations. I reminded students that ChatGPT may alter the meaning of a text when prompted to revise, that it can yield biased and inaccurate information, that it does not generate stylistically strong writing and, for those grade-oriented students, that it does not result in A-level work. It did not matter. The students still used it.

In one activity, my students drafted a paragraph in class, fed their work to ChatGPT with a revision prompt, and then compared the output with their original writing. However, these types of comparative analyses failed because most of my students were not developed enough as writers to analyze the subtleties of meaning or evaluate style. “It makes my writing look fancy,” one PhD student protested when I pointed to weaknesses in AI-revised text.

My students also relied heavily on AI-powered paraphrasing tools such as Quillbot. Paraphrasing well, like drafting original research, is a process of deepening understanding. Recent high-profile examples of “duplicative language” are a reminder that

paraphrasing is hard work. It is not surprising, then, that many students are tempted by AI-powered paraphrasing tools. These technologies, however, often result in inconsistent writing style, do not always help students avoid plagiarism, and allow the writer to gloss over understanding. Online paraphrasing tools are useful only when students have already developed a deep knowledge of the craft of writing.

Read More: *The 100 Most Influential People in AI*

Students who outsource their writing to AI lose an opportunity to think more deeply about their research. In a recent article on art and generative AI, author Ted Chiang put it this way: "Using ChatGPT to complete assignments is like bringing a forklift into the weight room; you will never improve your cognitive fitness that way." Chiang also notes that the hundreds of small choices we make as writers are just as important as the initial conception. Chiang is a writer of fiction, but the logic applies equally to scholarly writing. Decisions regarding syntax, vocabulary, and other elements of style imbue a text with meaning nearly as much as the underlying research.

Generative AI is, in some ways, a democratizing tool. Many of my students were non-native speakers of English. Their writing frequently contained grammatical errors. Generative AI is effective at correcting grammar. However, the technology often changes vocabulary and alters meaning even when the only prompt is "fix the grammar." My students lacked the skills to identify and correct subtle shifts in meaning. I could not convince them of the need for stylistic consistency or the need to develop voices as research writers.

The problem was not recognizing AI-generated or AI-revised text. At the start of every semester, I had students write in class. With that baseline sample as a point of comparison, it was easy for me to distinguish between my students' writing and text generated by

ChatGPT. I am also familiar with AI detectors, which purport to indicate whether something has been generated by AI. These detectors, however, are faulty. AI-assisted writing is easy to identify but hard to prove.

As a result, I found myself spending many hours grading writing that I knew was generated by AI. I noted where arguments were unsound. I pointed to weaknesses such as stylistic quirks that I knew to be common to ChatGPT (I noticed a sudden surge of phrases such as “delves into”). That is, I found myself spending more time giving feedback to AI than to my students.

So I quit.

The best educators will adapt to AI. In some ways, the changes will be positive. Teachers must move away from mechanical activities or assigning simple summaries. They will find ways to encourage students to think critically and learn that writing is a way of generating ideas, revealing contradictions, and clarifying methodologies.

However, those lessons require that students be willing to sit with the temporary discomfort of not knowing. Students must learn to move forward with faith in their own cognitive abilities as they write and revise their way into clarity. With few exceptions, my students were not willing to enter those uncomfortable spaces or remain there long enough to discover the revelatory power of writing.

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https://time.com/7026050

What Kind of President Would Kamala Harris Be?

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

On a sunny Wednesday in late September, Vice President Kamala Harris took the stage at Carnegie Mellon University for the first comprehensive economic-policy speech of her short presidential campaign.

Addressing a sedate audience in suits and ties, the Vice President outlined plans to strengthen small businesses, cut taxes on the middle class, and build more affordable housing. “I am a capitalist,” she told the Pittsburgh crowd, detailing how she would invest in startups and increase public-private partnerships, and describing an approach to economic growth that stressed stability.

It was a business-friendly speech tailored to business-friendly voters. But in a neck-and-neck presidential race, wonky pitches like these could make the difference. In a September New York *Times*/Siena poll, nearly 30% of likely voters said they felt they needed to learn more about the Vice President before making their choice. The fight to define Kamala Harris—who she is, what she stands for, and what kind of President she would be—will be one of the central battles of the campaign's final weeks.

To examine these questions, TIME spoke with 20 current and former Harris campaign advisers, former aides in her vice presidential and Senate offices, senior officials from each of the past five presidential administrations, and a range of policy experts. The portrait that emerged was of a politician who is more practical than ideological—a cautious candidate running in a change election, juggling the liabilities and benefits of her ties to her boss, President Joe Biden, as well as her own past positions, all while trying to keep the focus on her opponent. For Harris, policy specifics are in service to the larger goal of her campaign, which is to present a credible alternative to a second Donald Trump presidency.

At Carnegie Mellon, Harris offered the most detailed look at her economic plans since taking over as the Democratic nominee. She's proposing a $50,000 tax deduction to help Americans start more small businesses, and a $6,000 Child Tax Credit for families in the first year of a baby's life. She plans to extend $35 insulin to all Americans and eliminate degree requirements for 500,000 federal jobs. She wants to invest in research and development in new manufacturing industries, and trim red tape to further the Biden Administration's overhaul of America's infrastructure. Perhaps more than any other presidential candidate in recent memory, Harris has focused on solving America's housing crisis. She plans to offer $25,000 in down-payment assistance to first-time home buyers, a tax credit to incentivize builders, and pledges to build 3 million affordable housing units in her first term.

You can imagine the Harris presidency as an iOS upgrade of the current Administration: the operating system would stay the same, but with new features and better packaging. There are tonal differences between the two: Harris talks more—and more comfortably—about abortion rights than Biden ever did, speaks with more empathy about the suffering of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and has put housing and small business at the center of her plans for strengthening the middle class. But for the most part, allies and critics agree there is little evident policy daylight between the Democratic nominee and the President she replaced atop the party's ticket this summer.

Read More: *The Reintroduction of Kamala Harris*.

The sharper contrast is between Harris' current positions and her previous ones. If you talk to Harris' advisers, the word that frequently comes up is "pragmatic." But the candidate who campaigned for President in the 2020 Democratic primary was part of the party's leftward lurch. Back then, Harris supported a public health care option and a Green New Deal. She wanted to ban fracking, decriminalize unauthorized border crossings, and cut funding for immigrant detention. She backed forcing owners of assault weapons to sell them to the government. She has since changed her stance on all these issues.

Some voters see these shifts as part of a predictable pivot to the center; others see them as flip-flops in need of an explanation. Outside the auditorium at Carnegie Mellon, Rodrigo Lopez, a registered independent from Florida, was finishing up homework for his mechanical engineering class. Lopez followed the 2020 primary closely, and recalled that Harris took left-wing positions he disliked. He said he would never vote for Trump, but doesn't feel he knows enough about Harris to cast a ballot for her either. "It's hard to tell what her real policy intentions are," he says. Harris "could win my vote," Lopez adds, "if she articulates the reasons she's changed some of her stances."

Harris is hardly the first Presidential candidate to change her positions; Trump has flipped on everything from abortion to gun control to Social Security. When asked on 60 Minutes about her shifts since 2020, she said her time as Vice President has included a lot of "listening" and "consensus building." Forging compromise is "not a bad thing," she said, "as long as you don't compromise your values." What she means, according to her aides, is that her goals remain the same—affordable health care, a strong middle class—but she is flexible about how to achieve them. Yet she has skirted the thorough accounting of her policy evolution that Lopez is seeking, in part by speaking infrequently to reporters. When she does do interviews, she mostly favors local media, culture podcasts, or friendly talk shows. Harris declined repeated requests for an interview for this story. In contrast, Trump talked about his policy vision with a TIME reporter for 90 minutes across two interviews. Biden spoke to TIME at similar length before dropping out of the race.

Harris is running on what she won't do as much as what she would. She won't curb abortion rights, as Republicans want to do. She won't impose Trump's blanket tariffs, which most economists believe would raise prices and could throw the country into a recession (hers are more narrowly targeted). She won't initiate the mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, as Trump

promises, or fire legions of civil servants and replace them with MAGA loyalists. She won't attempt to overturn the results of a free and fair election, as Trump did.

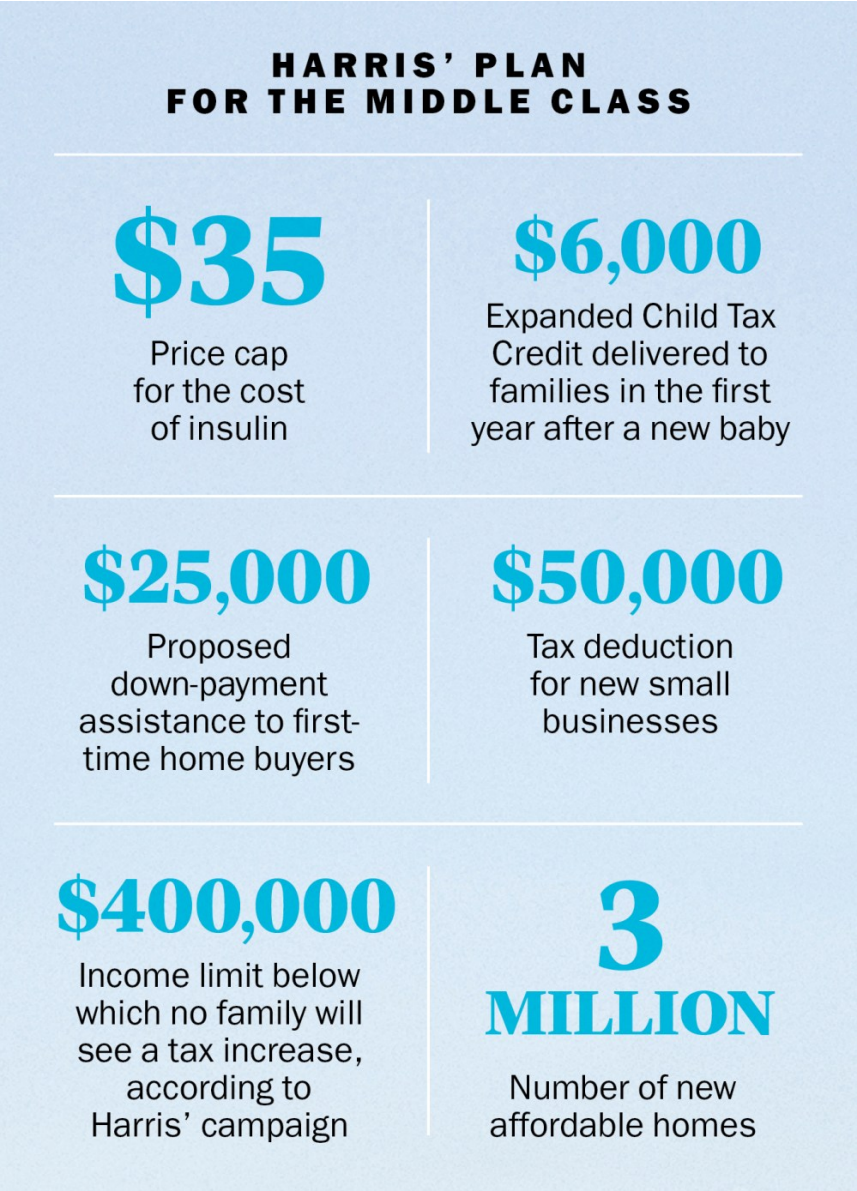
Once upon a time, presidential candidates compared health care plans or tax policies when competing for votes. These days, a policy-heavy campaign can weigh you down. Elizabeth Warren's "I have a plan for that" campaign sputtered through the 2020 primary, failing to win a single state. She lost the nomination to Biden, whose campaign was about "Restoring the Soul of the Nation," whatever that was supposed to mean. Airy promises of "Hope and Change" worked for Barack Obama, whereas Hillary Clinton's economic white papers did not. Trump's own campaign is constructed around a set of one-liners; he acknowledged in his recent debate with Harris that he had only "concepts of a plan" for overhauling the American health care system. None of that has cost him an iota of support. Instead of policy, many voters are making their decisions based on tribal allegiance or vibes.

Which is one reason Harris' approach may be a winning strategy. For many, the fact that she is not Trump is reason enough to vote for her. Running against MAGA has boosted Democrats to victory in scores of elections since 2016—whether those candidates had well-defined policies or not. "She knows that very few people are going to choose between her and Donald Trump based on some details of economic strategy, or some full-fledged proposal, so she's not presenting them," says David Wessel, director of fiscal and monetary policy at the Brookings Institution, a nonpartisan think tank. "It's a strategy to win the election. What reason is there to put out a detailed economic plan if your opponent is just throwing snowballs?"

When somebody joins the Vice President's staff, Harris often asks them to think of a wedding album. Imagine you've been to somebody's wedding, she says, and you go to their home and see

their photo album. When you start flipping through it, what are you looking for? The question is rhetorical; you're looking for yourself. "Because you want to see if you're in their vision of what their day was," recalls Rohini Kosoglu, Harris' former domestic-policy adviser. "That's how the American people feel when they're listening to us talk. Are they in our vision when we see the future of our country?"

This approach, more than any ideology or economic theory, animates Harris' style of governance. How does policy feel to the people who are experiencing it? One aide recalls a conversation about transportation infrastructure in which the Vice President asked how the outcome would work for a mother pushing her stroller down the street. Another ally recalls how, after hearing small-business owners tick off the burdens of paperwork, Harris worked to automate the way small businesses pay taxes. When discussing abortion restrictions, she often describes how painful it must be for a patient to wait in line at TSA while flying out of state to get reproductive care. "She puts a tremendous amount of capital on having people make sure they've really thought through the everyday life and experience of Americans," says Kosoglu.



Harris has put abortion at the center of her campaign, with a promise to suspend the filibuster to restore the protections of Roe v. Wade. She would extend Biden's initiatives on infrastructure, climate, and jobs, while adding new ones to build more affordable housing, invest in small businesses, and cut taxes on working families. On Oct. 8, she proposed a new Medicare benefit to help families pay for home health aides for seniors and the disabled. To finance all this, she proposes increasing the long-term capital gains tax on people who make more than $1 million a year, and restoring the 28% corporate tax rate that existed under previous Democratic and Republican Presidents.

Biden's domestic agenda was partly a product of the crises he inherited—rebuilding from the pandemic, revitalizing America's manufacturing sector. Harris, who had a front-row seat as voters' struggles with inflation created political headaches for the Administration, promises to curb high prices on everything from groceries to health care. The goal is "to lower your costs by cutting your taxes; to lower housing costs; to lower pharmaceutical costs," says Brian Deese, who served as director of the National Economic Council under Biden and is now one of Harris's top economic advisers.

Opponents tell a different story. Harris' agenda is "the Biden Administration agenda–lite," says Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president of the American Action Forum, a center-right think tank in Washington, and the former senior economic adviser for Republican John McCain's 2008 campaign. Holtz-Eakin considers Harris' plans to be "profoundly antigrowth" because of their reliance on government programs. Yet he thinks Trump's proposed tariffs would be equally bad. "Neither are good for the economy," he says.

By many measures, the economy has thrived under the Biden-Harris Administration, with 16 million new jobs created, unemployment hovering around 4%, and manufacturing jobs at a

10-year high, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. GDP growth is around 3% this year, and the stock market keeps hitting all-time highs. But even if the data is good, the economic vibes are bad. Housing costs in particular have skyrocketed over the past decade, which is why Harris has put housing affordability at the heart of her economic agenda.

Read More: *How Far Trump Would Go*.

In addition to that proposal for first-time homebuyers—which could be whittled down to pass a divided Congress—she's proposing a significant expansion of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, a popular and long-standing bipartisan initiative that incentivizes developers to build more affordable rentals. She's also proposing a tax cut designed to encourage more homes to be built for first-time homebuyers, and a $40 billion innovation fund. Housing experts say no other presidential candidate in recent memory has proposed such a detailed plan. For years, housing affordability was a "silent crisis," says Dennis Shea, who leads the housing program at the Bipartisan Policy Center. "Now, it's a front-burner issue."

Harris has also proposed several ways to ease burdens on small businesses, which provide nearly half of American jobs. Helping small businesses was part of her White House portfolio, and even conservative critics acknowledge she's been attentive to the issue. In addition to offering a $50,000 tax deduction to help new small businesses offset startup costs, she proposes to ease permitting and automate processes, with a goal of 25 million new startup applications in her first term. "If you ask small businesses what they don't like, they will always say, It's really hard to get permits and hard to get this licensing. The paperwork has gotten to be too much," says Karen Mills, who ran the Small Business Administration under President Obama. "It's the first time I've heard someone listen to that."

Some economists are skeptical of Harris' tax proposals. "In the aggregate, all these provisions would have a negative impact on economic growth," says Alex Durante, an economist at the Tax Foundation, a center-right research institute. But even many conservatives doubt Trump would be much better for the economy, citing his tariffs and immigration plans. Goldman Sachs announced in September that they estimate a stronger economy and more job growth under a Harris presidency than a second Trump term. Modeling by the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania forecasts that Trump's plans would increase the deficit five times as much as Harris' would.

Taken together, Harris' economic plans are "good for lower- and middle-income Americans and small businesses, and tough on high-net-worth households and corporations," says Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's, who has predicted a Harris victory. Her proposals are "not going to change the growth rates of the economy in a meaningful way," Zandi adds, "but it does change who benefits the most from that, and that's going to be low- and middle-income households."

Biden's successor will have to grapple with multiple foreign policy crises now gripping the White House. The next Commander in Chief will have to deal with wars in Europe and the Middle East, and competition with China. Harris has deliberately not staked out new foreign policy positions, aides say, since she's still the current Vice President. Still, there are subtle but important differences between their approaches.

While Biden views the world as a contest between democracy and authoritarianism, Harris, a former prosecutor, sees it through the prism of rules and norms: a fight between those who uphold the rules-based order and those who undermine it. As a Californian who once represented Silicon Valley, she sees technology as a crucial part of America's global leadership, and would put it at the center of her foreign policy.

Read More: *How Joe Biden Leads*.

She also tends to talk more about the Global South than Biden does. One of Harris' first diplomatic assignments was to stem the flow of migrants arriving in the U.S. by addressing the economic and security conditions in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In an effort to improve life in the region, Harris helped launch a public-private partnership that drove big companies to invest more than $5 billion there.

Such long-term economic strategies haven't succeeded in the past. And illegal crossings still spiked under Biden. Harris, like her boss, has recently toughened her position on border security. She now talks about her experience as the attorney general of a border state, prosecuting transnational cartels and drug smugglers. She

supported the bipartisan immigration bill that would have hired 1,500 new border-patrol agents, improved the asylum process, and paid for new fentanyl-inspection machines. Though she is a daughter of immigrants, “Harris is not as sympathetic to some of the immigration advocacy,” says Doris Meissner, a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank. “She’s sympathetic to immigrants, but she’s also going to be strong on the fact that there needs to be control and discipline and consistency to the way that we do it.”

On the spreading war in the Middle East, Harris has condemned the atrocities committed by Hamas on Oct. 7, promoted Israel’s right to defend itself, and called for a cease-fire with the return of the hostages. Some supporters glean signs of greater sympathy for civilians in Gaza, even if the distinctions are subtle and rhetorical. “What I sense from her is that she will be less accommodating of Israel even than Biden was,” says Michael Allen, who served on President George W. Bush’s National Security Council. “She’s more progressive than Biden is, so I think she’d be more inclined to the point of view that the Israelis, especially [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu, have prosecuted the war too aggressively.” A Harris aide said in a statement that “she has a lifelong and unwavering commitment to the security of Israel,” and added that she shares Biden’s larger goals of de-escalation, a hostage deal, and a cease-fire.

Harris has not given an address focused solely on foreign policy, and she is viewed mostly as a supporting character in the Biden Administration’s overseas dramas. “I don’t think anybody with a straight face could really say that she’s considered a foreign policy powerhouse,” says Elbridge Colby, a national-security expert who served in the Trump Pentagon and argues for a tougher approach on China. Her closest foreign policy adviser, Philip Gordon, has served Democratic Presidents since Bill Clinton, and he and his aides are more likely to stay the course than seek to remake American strategy. A Harris presidency, says Colby, would mean a

“generation younger, more progressive version of the current foreign policy.”

To Republicans’ dismay, Harris’ careful policy rollout appears to be working. When she entered the race, Trump had a decisive lead on many of the issues voters say they consider most important: immigration, the economy, the cost of living. Polls show Harris beginning to erase this edge. Harris is virtually tied with Trump on who voters trust to handle the economy, and only narrowly trails him on immigration, according to a September AP poll. She continues to lead by broad margins on health care, abortion rights, and climate change. Two recent polls found that more Americans see Harris as the candidate representing “change.” Whether it’s change from Biden or change from Trump, Harris supporters have seized that mantle; the chant at her rallies is “We’re Not Going Back.”

Still, 65% of registered voters say the country is on the “wrong track,” which is a tough number for the party in power. That sour mood presents Harris with a delicate challenge: boasting about the Biden Administration’s accomplishments on infrastructure, insulin, and green jobs, while distancing herself from both her predecessor and her old policy platform. “She has a record of saying things that she’s now trying to pivot from,” says Ted Gayer, president of the Niskanen Center, a nonpartisan think tank. “I can look at that and it can cause suspicion, or I could look at that and be happy for the pivot. I’m happy for the pivot.”

Aides argue that her current platform is rooted in political reality. She is “guided by pragmatism, not ideology,” says Deese, a top economic adviser. That “doesn’t mean we can’t set big goals, but it means we need to be highly practical and constantly ask ourselves the question, Is this working? And if it’s not, try something else.”

As Harris left her economic-policy speech at Carnegie Mellon, students lined up along the street, waiting silently for her motorcade. As the line of black cars passed the crowd, Harris appeared in the window, waving through the glass, her face framed by the window like a living postage stamp. The crowd began to cheer, and the girl standing next to me began to cry. Her name was Noemi Barbagli, an 18-year-old with long curly hair. I asked Barbagli if there was a particular policy proposal of Harris' that excited her. "Honestly? Not that much," she said. "She brings a lot of hope and optimism. I know what I don't like about Donald Trump."

—*With reporting by Leslie Dickstein and Simmone Shah*

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https://time.com/7081350

How President Prabowo Subianto Is Steering Indonesia's Future

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

A dozen masked commandos crouch inside a jet-black navy dinghy as it carves across shimmering Jakarta Bay. At the bow, loops of 12.7mm bullets spill from a tri-barreled gatling gun; at the stern, Prabowo Subianto, Indonesia's Defense Minister and President-elect, appraises the fishing boats and rusting refueling stations that pepper the inky water. It's a scene familiar to Prabowo from his

time leading the nation's special forces—although today's mission targets not AK47-totting rebels, but stench and squalor.

As the dinghy docks at Muara Angke, a slum perched on the northern shore of Indonesia's sprawling capital, Prabowo, 72, clambers onto land and plunges into a cheering crowd, shaking hands and kissing babies. In his wake, aides pass out plastic trinkets from trash bags to barefooted kids. One mother carries forward her young son, who is blinded by easily treatable cataracts. Prabowo listens to her tearful pleas and instructs a secretary to take them straight to a doctor; the same for an old woman with a tumor sprouting out of one nostril.

"There are officials in uniform everywhere so why haven't they already helped them?!" Prabowo spits bitterly as we struggle through the melee.

It feels like a campaign stop, but Prabowo isn't campaigning: he already won Indonesia's highest office with over 58% of the vote in February elections and will be inaugurated on Oct. 20. That landslide saw over 96 million votes cast for the former general—the most ever for a single candidate anywhere in recorded history.

It was two weeks before polling day that Prabowo last stopped by Muara Angke to be “heartbroken,” he says, by its pauperized inhabitants wallowing waist-deep in floodwater filled with human excrement and discarded mussel shells. (Harvesting the seafood is the main local industry.)

Prabowo immediately ordered the National Defense University to construct 200 new low-cost floating and stilted houses fitted with solar panels, indoor bathrooms, and filtered drinking water. Those ubiquitous mussel shells were gathered from the gutter and ground into low-cost bricks and paving slabs; a blight turned to homes. This return trip in August was simply to kick the tires, inspect that all was shipshape like an officer on parade, though the deafening three-syllable chants of “Pra-bo-wo!” telegraphed the local reaction even before he had stepped onto the dock.

“It’s heartwarming,” Prabowo tells TIME of his reception during over six hours of interviews, his first with Western media since his election victory. “But it’s also sad. The way these people lived. And there’s still so much work to do.”

If Prabowo’s success dragging Muara Angke out of the mire is impressive, he faces a stiffer challenge to uplift all of Indonesia’s

280 million people. The archipelago nation of more than 17,000 islands is Southeast Asia's biggest economy and has made great strides under the previous two terms of outgoing President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, who still enjoys a remarkable 77% approval rating, but must step down due to term limits. Jokowi boosted health and education services for poorer Indonesians and launched grand infrastructure projects including toll roads, seaports, and airports. He slashed tape hampering foreign investment and championed a "downstream" policy to retain the fruits of Indonesia's bountiful resources locally.

Having transformed from a fierce rival to champion of Jokowi, Prabowo was billed as the continuity candidate, though he has bold ideas of his own. In contrast to his predecessor's grandiose plans to host marquee events like Formula 1 racing or the Olympics, Prabowo prioritizes direct action that immediately improves lives. He is rolling out a $30 billion plan to offer free meals in schools; intends to fight endemic corruption by raising civil service salaries and using technology such as AI; and plans to utilize new farming techniques to turn the world's fourth-most populous nation into a food exporter within five years. Poverty, meanwhile, he plans to eradicate in two. "Almighty God and the people of Indonesia gave me the mandate," he says. "I always say we need power, but to do good with that power."

Yet Prabowo is a controversial figure, to put it mildly. He was one of the most feared generals under reviled dictator Suharto—not to mention the strongman's son-in-law. Serious human-rights accusations meant he was banned from visiting the U.S. until his appointment as defense minister in 2019. He unsuccessfully ran for president twice before with divisive campaigns that brazenly courted the Islamic right. He finally triumphed by reinventing himself as a *gemoy*, or cute and cuddly, grandpa, whose trademark dancing on the stump garnered many millions of views on social media amongst younger voters unburdened by historical baggage. Yet activists fear Prabowo's rise will herald an erosion of

democracy and emboldening of a military already accused of serious abuses in restive minority regions.

As Southeast Asia's largest country and top economy, Indonesia has always been the lynchpin of its strategically vital region. But with over a quarter of the world's supply of minerals, it has also emerged as a battleground between the U.S. and China for the copper, gold, and nickel essential for the green transition and any tech economy. Neither has a lock. Regular Chinese intrusions into Indonesia's territorial waters stoke public outrage, while Washington's support for Israel in the Gaza crisis has proved toxic in a nation with more Muslims than any other.

Prabowo nods in all directions. His first foreign trip after his election victory was to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. In July, he also met Vladimir Putin in Moscow, describing Russia as a "great friend." At the stump, Prabowo railed against Western "double standards" and insisted "we don't really need Europe anymore" in response to E.U. import restrictions.

"We respect all great powers," Prabowo tells TIME. "China is a great civilization. And the United States is a great power [but] sometimes makes mistakes. They forgot who their true friends are. Some parts of the U.S. administration, at a certain point, have an opinion about me. But I always put the interests of my people first."

He may have spent two decades in the political wilderness, but Prabowo has been preparing for this his entire life. In contrast with Jokowi, a former carpenter raised in a shanty and Indonesia's first leader without military or political connections, Prabowo is very much of elite stock. His grandfather founded Indonesia's central bank, while his father served as minister for the economy under first President Sukarno. But his father was forced into exile for

joining a failed rebellion, so Prabowo spent his childhood in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Switzerland, and England.

Upon returning to Indonesia, Prabowo joined its army special forces unit, Kopassus, later receiving training in the U.S. Army's Fort Bragg and Fort Benning. His marriage to one of Suharto's daughters kept him close to power as he climbed the military ziggurat. But after Suharto was toppled in 1998, Prabowo was discharged from the armed forces for alleged human rights violations relating to the detention of democracy activists and he went into exile in Jordan.

Shunned by the military elite that made him, Prabowo joined his younger brother Hashim's mining and agribusiness empire. After a quiet return to Indonesia, he set about consolidating his place in the nation's new democratic politics. After two failed presidential bids in 2014 and 2019, Prabowo finally triumphed, thanks in part to backing from the popular Jokowi.

It wasn't a natural union. The two had been fierce rivals and Prabowo's 2019 presidential run ended with thousands of supporters converging on Jakarta to protest what they claimed was a stolen ballot. (The results tallied with pre-elections polls and independent monitors found no malfeasance.) Eight people were killed and more than 600 injured as protesters armed with rocks and fireworks torched cars and battled police. Prabowo says he had an epiphany when inspecting dozens of supporters nursing wounds and sputtering from caustic tear gas.

"This young boy, no more than 17 or 18, looked at me and said, 'Prabowo, we are ready to die for you!'" he recalls. "I dropped to the side, shook him and said, 'No, I don't want you to die for me. You must live for your parents and for Indonesia.' And then I just told myself, I'm not going to have these young kids die for me. I don't want that."

It was a climbdown that ultimately sparked his ascent. After Prabowo ordered his followers home, Jokowi sent an emissary to seek talks. The two adversaries unexpectedly bonded and Jokowi invited Prabowo into his administration. Although initially reluctant, Prabowo found the offer of leading his beloved armed forces impossible to turn down. “Jokowi is a very decent man,” says Prabowo, adding with a grin: “And I would like to consider myself somewhat decent also!”

This softening belied Prabowo’s formidable reputation as a battle-hardened Kopassus commando, when the culture, as he puts it, was “kill or be killed.” But Prabowo is too complex a character to be distilled as simply the “massacre general,” as he sums up his Western reputation with a resigned eyeroll. Along with the local Bahasa and Betawi dialects, he speaks fluent English, French, and German. Over grilled ribeye and octopus salad at his favorite Italian restaurant in Jakarta, he’s gregarious company, musing at length about the importance of cartographers in the Napoleonic wars, controversial links between race and intelligence in the 1994 treatise *The Bell Curve*, and the role of religious sectarianism in the European renaissance. He’s currently devouring a biography of Catherine de’ Medici. “I’m an avid student of history,” he says.

Extremely health conscious, he rises at 6 a.m. to swim before beginning his day, listening to rock, classical, or military music on underwater headphones as aides linger nearby to note down any ideas that spring between lengths. He detests smoking, which can be problematic in a nation where almost three-quarters of the male population lights up, and has even scolded foreign dignitaries who indulge in the habit. (Smokers on Prabowo's team are constantly trying to duck out for a quick puff without being noticed.) And he's obsessed by education and IQ, reeling off the supposed intelligence scores of historical figures.

"Einstein was 200; Napoleon was 180," he estimates. "I'm just 105, I'm not that smart, but I like to use smart people. I have a lot of 130, 140 people working for me."

Once part of Jokowi's team, Prabowo proved a diligent and unswerving colleague, abjuring any opportunity to undermine his former foe. When the 2024 election came around, Jokowi shunned the candidacy of his own party colleague to instead back Prabowo, who agreed to run alongside Jokowi's eldest son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who will now serve as vice-president.

Yet many Indonesians are perturbed by Jokowi's brazen attempts to retain influence from behind the scenes. A failed attempt to change election rules to allow his youngest son to run for the deputy governor post of Central Java brought thousands onto the street, with demonstrators in Jakarta even trying to break down the gates of parliament. Jokowi has also installed loyalists in key posts in the police, judiciary, and defanged the nation's anti-corruption commission.

Prabowo has no dynastic ambitions—his only son is an award-winning Paris fashion designer—and he scoffs at the idea that Jokowi's maneuverings portend conflict ahead. "The majority of

the Indonesian people want continuity," Prabowo says. "The fact that [Gibran] is with me strengthens that bond."

Prabowo may not be orchestrating the shredding of democratic norms, but he's a primary beneficiary, and liberals fear what he will do with the more centralized power structure that Jokowi is bequeathing him. Others believe his family's web of business interests will offer opportunities for graft and favor. "Prabowo's origins at the very center of the old New Order of Suharto, which was very corrupt and run by predatory business and political alliances, suggests that he's certainly used to those sorts of arrangements," says Vedi Hadiz, professor of Asian studies at the University of Melbourne. (Prabowo counters that fighting corruption is at the very top of his agenda.)

Yet his predecessor's obsession with legacy is problematic—not least Jokowi's signature scheme of Nusantara, Indonesia's new capital hewed out of 400,000 hectares of the Borneo rainforest, complete with ostentatious eagle-shaped presidential palace. While 12,000 civil servants were scheduled to move in by September, only a fraction of their lodgings have been built. Prabowo has vowed to continue the project, highlighting how moving the capital from choked, sinking Jakarta has been mooted by various presidents from Sukarno and was even part of his own 2014 election platform. "It's a very noble ideal," he says, "and right for the national integration of our people."

But at $30 billion, it's an expensive gambit, especially as Nusantara has also proven a hard sell to foreign and domestic investors. But the project has only received about $3.5 billion of the $6.4 billion investments expected by the end of 2024—all from local companies and state-owned institutions. That changed last month when a Chinese property firm Delonix Group broke ground on a $33 million complex of hotels and offices in Nusantara. "This will bring confidence in other investors to enter the new capital," Jokowi said at the ceremony.

The fear among Western diplomatic circles is that Nusantara increases Indonesia's susceptibility to influence from China, which is already engaged in several transformative infrastructure projects, notably the flagship Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway. However, wooing the superpower increasingly entails its own costs. Under Jokowi, Indonesia banned the exports of raw nickel ore—a key component of EV batteries—in 2020 to pursue a "downstream" policy of processing raw materials locally to retain more of the value-add, with Prabowo insisting he's "completely on the same page." But the fact that over 90% of Indonesia's nickel smelters are built by Chinese companies has led to friction with the U.S.

Last October, nine U.S. senators wrote a letter urging the Biden administration to reject a potential free trade agreement with Indonesia due to "weak labor protections, Chinese dominance of Indonesian mining and refining, significant biodiversity impacts" among other concerns. Already, the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act stipulates that electric vehicles containing China-sourced batteries and metal components are not eligible for $7,500 tax rebates. Such geopolitical impediments are already pushing Jakarta to diversify its investor pool for extractive industries.

For Prabowo, the priority is to appear "part of the American geopolitical community but economically to court China," says Hadiz. "Like Jokowi, he will want Chinese investment into infrastructure and the capital city project."

Prabowo insists his goal is to keep Indonesia non-aligned, even if geopolitics renders this tightrope ever narrower.

"We have the history of always being neutral," he says. "When an Indonesian leader leaves this tradition, he brings us into disaster. So we respect the Americans, we want more American participation here, but we also respect China."

It was not always that way, of course, with Prabowo's military career focused on countering leftist threats fostered by Beijing. Like many military men, Prabowo is hesitant to discuss his past campaigns. "Don't ask an old soldier to tell war stories," he demurs. "They'll keep talking and talking." But over lunch in the Defense Ministry he eventually acquiesces.

Soon emerge tales of Prabowo becoming stranded in a minefield, one comrade's severed leg flying past his face; a suicide pact with another when cornered under heavy fire; and impersonating the noise of a buffalo to contact partisans deep in the Timorese jungle, only to be confronted by the real thing.

While Prabowo insists he "served with honor" throughout his military career, accusations dog his various deployments. During his tours of Timor-Leste, where some 180,000 Timorese perished during the 1975-1999 Indonesian occupation, he stands accused of overseeing the 1983 massacre of some 200 people in Kraras, today dubbed the "town of widows." In Timor-Leste's 2005 Chega! Truth and Reconciliation Report, Prabowo's name appears 19 times. "Prabowo should be in jail," says Naldo Rei, a former child soldier for the Timorese resistance who was repeatedly imprisoned and tortured by the Indonesian military. "Not just for Timor-Leste but also inside Indonesia. Many people are hungry for justice."

In August 1998, just months after the fall of Suharto's regime, Prabowo was discharged from the military for his alleged role abducting at least 23 activists; one was found killed, nine were returned, and 13 others remain officially missing. Although Prabowo was never formally charged with any crime, a 2005 investigation by Indonesia's National Human Rights Commission concluded that responsibility lay with the Kopassus unit under direct orders of its then commander: Prabowo.

Prabowo denies all allegations. "I've never caused any human rights abuses," he says. "My conscience is clear." He also points out how some former democracy activists detained under the Suharto regime are now his supporters, such as one named Budiman Soedjatmiko, whom Prabowo not entirely reassuringly told during a campaign event: "Sorry man, I used to chase you. But I've already apologized, right?"

While calls for accountability will never disappear, there is an appreciation across the region that the demise of dictatorship and birth of democracy involve events that most can, if not forgive, at least accept. "We are all very happy that Prabowo is the president," Timor-Leste President Jose Ramos-Horta tells TIME in Dili. "Ironically, Indonesian people who served in Timor, civilian or military, have more attachment and care more about Timor-Leste than those with zero involvement. With Prabowo, we may upgrade our relationship."

The staunch backing of Ramos-Horta, who won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize for advocating for Timor-Leste self-determination, indicates historic baggage won't count against Prabowo in the international arena. There's little doubt the cosmopolitan Prabowo will be more at home in the world than Jokowi, who tended to shun international fora like the U.N. General Assembly. In June last year, Prabowo even presented a peace plan for Ukraine at the Shangri-la Dialogue, calling for a demilitarized zone and a U.N. referendum.

The question is whether Prabowo will finally rouse this sleeping giant from its slumber. “People always want Indonesia to be more active,” Prabowo says, “but we have to take care of our people first.”

At Prabowo’s ranch in the hills south of Jakarta, 400 young men in crewcuts and oil green uniforms fidget in an amphitheater as the Dutch war epic *The East* plays overhead. Suddenly, the screen turns white and Prabowo strolls on stage, prompting all to stand and launch into a traditional Javanese war dance, punching the air, thumping chests, and chanting in hypnotic unison. The display ends and Prabowo strolls the ranks of recruits, asking their home province, their university major, and razzing a couple of the stoutest about their paunch.

These are recent university graduates from across Indonesia recruited for Prabowo's flagship project, dubbed Graduates for Development. The plan is to eventually recruit 50,000 smart young Indonesians—minimum IQ 110—into this special civil service program, instill them with military discipline and patriotic zeal, and dispatch them to far-flung provinces to guide development projects. Much like his success building houses in Muara Angke, Prabowo wants to sidestep Indonesia's Kafkaesque bureaucracy with direct action.

First duty, he says, will be the free school meals roll-out, after which they will be entrusted to teach farmers new sustainable agricultural techniques, and then help small businesses grow through applied technology. Prabowo says he "borrowed" the concept from John F. Kennedy's Peace Corps and his "best and brightest" philosophy. "I'm a man of action," Prabowo says later that evening over dinner in his ranch library, as he quietly passes scraps of meat to two of his favorite dogs, Kiki and Romeo, ensconced by his feet. "I cannot see suffering, poverty, and injustice and not do anything."

Following 10 years of the "son of the slums" Jokowi, Prabowo represents a return to power for the nation's aristocracy, though today's informed, sophisticated Indonesians won't be satisfied with scraps from his table. Prabowo knows his controversial background means judgement will be quicker and more withering. But after so many years in the wilderness, he's determined not to waste time. "The success of society rests on the wellbeing of your people," he says, eyes suddenly narrowing: "You are either with me or you can get out of the way."

—With reporting by Koh Ewe/Singapore and Leslie Dickstein/New York

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‘The Algorithms Are Harsh Masters.’ Jeremy Strong on Taking a Risk With a New Film About Trump

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

Jeremy Strong is not known for his sense of humor. When getting dressed, he favors brown for its “monastic” connotation. He famously thought that *Succession*, the HBO show that shot him to stardom, was a straight drama when his co-stars believed it to be a comedy. When he sits down for our Zoom conversation in September—in a brown shirt, of course—he recites poetry and quotes Stella Adler, the godmother of Method acting. He describes *Succession* as reflecting “the Emersonian notion of the institution as the shadow of a man.”

But when I suggest that he could have capitalized on that show’s success by earning a hefty paycheck from a superhero movie—as many in his position have done—he cracks a self-aware smile. The

notion that he, an actor who insists on disposing of his own personality in order to fully inhabit a character, would implement that extreme approach to play a spandex-wearing hero is, indeed, funny.

Read More: *Jeremy Strong Is on 2022's Time 100 List*

Strong, once an eager upstart, has arguably grown into the pretentiousness he's been accused of in the past. Before answering a question, he tends to lean back in his chair, look up at the ceiling, and actually consider his words rather than rattling off a canned quote. He has let himself go a bit gray, the effect closer to thoughtful professor than *Succession*'s hapless nepo baby Kendall Roy.

After four seasons of rapturous acclaim and accolades for that role—not to mention a Best Actor Tony for a recent run of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* on Broadway—Strong had his pick of films. "There's a lot of, like, finance-bro projects coming my way," he says. "You know, the son of a dynastic fill-in-the-blank." It's the type of pigeonholing some actors would readily build a career upon, but he dismissed those offers. Instead, this fall he is playing—to riff on Emerson—a man who overshadows the institution that is Donald Trump's Republican Party: Roy Cohn.

Ali Abbasi's *The Apprentice* tells the story of Donald Trump's rise in 1970s and '80s New York under the tutelage of Cohn. The gritty film introduces Trump (Sebastian Stan) as a fumbling brat before Cohn teaches him to bully his way to fame through aggression, half-truths, and blanket denials. For much of the film, Strong sports a fake tan and Speedos, barking orders at the trembling man who would become the 45th U.S. President.

Read more: The Apprentice *Is a Subtle Act of Resistance*

Despite its premiering at the Cannes Film Festival to positive reviews, no studio was willing to distribute the film in U.S. theaters. Trump's lawyers sent a cease-and-desist letter, and one of the film's key financiers sold his stake over "creative differences." "Everybody was afraid to touch this movie," says Strong. It includes a scene of Trump raping his then wife Ivana (based on her divorce deposition, now recanted) and another of him receiving cosmetic surgery. "As allegedly liberal or courageous as Hollywood might be, it was dismaying to all of us to see how risk-averse everyone was," says Strong. "In the summer, when it really looked like this movie was going to be censored, that just felt like a harbinger of something extremely dark to me."

After many months in limbo, *The Apprentice* found a willing distributor and will hit theaters just weeks before the U.S. presidential election. Strong is relieved because he fears that Hollywood no longer produces provocative art. "I'm trying to find material that feels like it's about something that matters," he says. "I guess I feel like the world is on fire, and I'm not that interested in laundry-folding content."

One day during the shoot, Strong asked the costume designer to find him a full-body frog suit. Cohn, who made his name prosecuting Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, also happened to collect frog paraphernalia. Later that day, Strong filmed an entire dream sequence in a frog costume, serenading the future President in bed with "I Am What I Am" from *La Cage aux Folles*.

The sequence contains Freudian layers: The 1978 comedy tells the story of a gay couple who masquerade as straight to be accepted by the conservative parents of their son's fiancée. Cohn, a closeted gay man and influential Republican, maintained he was neither queer nor HIV-positive until the day he succumbed to AIDS. To position Cohn in bed next to Trump, a notorious hypochondriac, highlights

their strained relationship as Trump rose and Cohn fell in New York high society.

The sequence was cut, to Strong's dismay, because they couldn't get the rights to the song. "His legacy is this defiant denial of objective reality, of his emotional reality, of his homosexuality, and all of the shame and self-hatred he experienced," Strong says. "It all caught up with him in the end, HIV and being disbarred. I couldn't help but feel a kind of pity for him."

The movie's insistence on humanizing its subjects has raised eyebrows on the left even as its subject matter has drawn scorn from the right. "I've heard that I might have made him too human. I don't know what that means. We're all human," Strong says.

"It's a gift that actors get to suspend judgment and attempt to empathize even with people who others would say are despicable. It's very dangerous, this idea that some people are not worthy of empathy." He quotes the writer William Saroyan: "Despise evil and ungodliness, but not men of ungodliness or evil. These, understand."

To understand a person Strong describes as one of the worst humans of the 20th century, he watched interviews, listened to recordings, and tried to reconcile Cohn's contradictions. "This person was both monstrous and childlike, gleeful and absolutely

vicious," he says. "I'm always looking for the possibility of transformation and risk."

Read More: *The Man Who First Fueled Donald Trump's Paranoid Politics*

Strong underwent a physical transformation, including donning prosthetics and embarking on what he admits was a "kind of dangerous level of rapid weight loss." But he quickly dismisses any discussion of bodily changes, often rewarded by the Academy. "You have to put your body, which is your instrument, through things to render something precisely. But that stuff all feels cosmetic. The really important thing is the inner stuff." Strong calls inhabiting Cohn's mind entering "the heart of darkness."

This isn't the first fictional portrayal of Cohn. He is a prominent character in the Pulitzer-winning play *Angels in America*, which interrogates Cohn's own hypocrisy during the AIDS epidemic. Al Pacino won an Emmy for the role in the HBO version. Strong, as revealed in a *New Yorker* profile, is perhaps Pacino's biggest fan. He grew up with a poster of the *Dog Day Afternoon* actor on his wall and reportedly nearly bankrupted Yale's theater group creating an award for Pacino to lure him to speak on campus. "If anything, my hesitation was taking it on because of what Al did, and the anxiety of influence," he says. Cohn, in Strong's head, wasn't the real-life man but Pacino's version. "And, you know, he's someone who I revere," Strong says of Pacino, again permitting himself a knowing grin.

Strong aspires to a type of acting career that doesn't really exist anymore, the kind someone like his *Lincoln* co-star Daniel Day-Lewis and few others have been able to craft. Indeed, Strong is dismayed by the direction of Hollywood studios. He has spent three years working with the Danish filmmaker Tobias Lindholm trying to get a movie made about the mass tort brought by Sept. 11 first

responders for health care. He sat with firefighters and EMTs during the research process, but no studio would make the film. “That’s something I feel absolutely crushed that people won’t get to see,” he says. He blames the industry’s fear of unique ideas. “The algorithms are harsh masters.”

Strong chooses every project with intention—films by Steven Spielberg (*Lincoln*), Adam McKay (*The Big Short*), and Aaron Sorkin (*The Trial of the Chicago 7*) that dig into critical moments in history. He’s set to star in a limited series about the Boeing 737 Max crashes from the screenwriter of *Argo*. But he says his decision to take on two political projects in an election year was largely happenstance. In *An Enemy of the People*, he played a scientist whose warnings of ecological disaster are shouted down by self-interested townspeople, a parable for the politicization of climate change.

The material he takes on cannot always be so dark. “There are certain things I would not be able to touch anymore,” he admits. “I’ve become more conscious, because I have three small kids, of what I am putting into the world. Am I adding one qubit of light to the world?”

To that end, he is preparing for a role in a Bruce Springsteen biopic. Strong treated himself to what he describes as a spiritual experience at a Springsteen concert in Asbury Park, N.J. the night before we speak, and, earlier this summer, in a field in Denmark, where his family has a home. Swaying to Springsteen’s music in a field with 70,000 Danish revelers healed his soul after its immersion into Cohn’s psyche. Though, as he thinks about it, embodying Cohn had its strange delights. “Roy was actually a pretty gleeful guy and had a relatively uncomplicated relationship to the awful things he did,” he says. “He did them without conscience or shame. The truth is, it’s probably more difficult to watch someone like Roy Cohn than it was to be him.”

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Welcome to Pop Culture’s Curiously Defanged Goth Girl Autumn

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.

Autumn may be the most atmospheric season, tantalizing the senses with soft sweaters and warm beverages and the crunch of colorful leaves underfoot. But, as we all suddenly remember once Sept. 30 gives way to Oct. 1, it isn’t all flannel-swaddled, pumpkin-spice ASMR. This is a time charged with the contradictions inherent in the end of the calendar—cozy and eerie, Thanksgiving and Halloween, harvest and decay. The entertainment industry offers up its own autumnal cornucopia of contrasts. Sandwiched between chummy fall baking competitions and the anodyne made-for-TV Christmas movies that arrive earlier each year is a dollop of bloody, gory, nightmare-inducing horror on screens big and small.

Falling somewhere between the two is a third spooky-season sensibility—one epitomized this year by the reunion of Tim Burton, Winona Ryder, and Michael Keaton in a blockbuster sequel to their classic undead comedy *Beetlejuice*: goth. With aesthetic roots in pre-Victorian Gothic fiction, goth was adapted into a black-shrouded subculture by fans of melancholic 1980s British rock bands like the Cure and Cocteau Twins and has, since then, been sliced, diced, and spliced into dozens of divergent factions. I'm using it here in the broadest sense. It's dark, it's spooky, it's romantic, it's death-obsessed. It's velvet and lace and vampires and witches and black cats and dripping candles and séances conducted by Ouija board. It has the trappings of horror but no interest in jump scares. And more often than not, especially as it approaches a half-century of existence, goth has a campy sense of humor about its own melodrama.

Goth's mainstream profile tends to ebb and surge, and the past few years have seen a new wave of macabre media that seems to be cresting this fall. (What says *goth revival* more than the Cure releasing its first new song in 16 years, a few days after the autumnal equinox?) In a recent *Vogue* essay trumpeting fashion's rediscovery of morbid beauty, Tish Weinstock—whose forthcoming book *How to Be a Goth: Notes on Undead Style* is itself a bellwether—identifies a "full-blown gothic resurrection" and proclaims: "welcome to the season of the witch." Weinstock is right to name witches as the supreme goth signifier of 2024. Every retro movement gets repackaged to suit the era into which it's reborn. And from *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* to *Agatha All Along*, this year's extra-comforting model has an aspirational girl-power quality grounded in nostalgia for the goth-pop artifacts of the late '80s and '90s.

Tracing the origins of the goth aesthetic is a fool's errand. While the subculture coalesced within a music scene transitioning from '70s punk to '80s new wave, the sensibility has no discrete genesis. It predates proto-goth touchstones like *Rocky Horror*, the droning decadence of *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, silent-film vamp Theda Bara, the chilling fictions of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allen Poe, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Goth did not even begin with the eponymous Germanic tribes that raided the waning Roman Empire. Insofar as it is entails the romanticization of death and the occult, the goth worldview might be as old as human society—a Freudian, death-drive fixation that's as apparent in the funereal traditions of Ancient Egypt as it is in Chappell Roan's velvet, chainmail, and crucifix VMAs ensemble.

Goth as we know it today can, however, be loosely sorted into eras. If the early scene was predominantly about music and nightlife, then by the late '80s goth had become a full-on pop phenomenon, spawning superstars like filmmaker Burton and author Anne Rice, with Marilyn Manson and Hot Topic mass-producing PVC-clad rebellion for the '90s mallrat. A binary of sorts emerged, with such aggressively masculine variations as the industrial rock of Manson and his mentor at the time, Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails, on one side and a witchier, female-driven vibe on the other. This was a decade bookended by riot grrrl's feminist-punk energy and the

neopagan, earth mother ethos of Lilith Fair; goth girls synthesized aspects of both movements, white magic and white-hot rage.

In 1988, Burton gave that audience an icon in Ryder's *Beetlejuice* heroine, Lydia Deetz, who dressed like a miniature Siouxsie Sioux and moved into a country house where only she had the ability to see the ghosts of its previous owners. Ryder grew into an offbeat romantic lead with Burton's 1990 cult classic *Edward Scissorhands*, the teen black comedy *Heathers*, and Francis Ford Coppola's take on *Dracula*. Following in her combat-booted footsteps, Christina Ricci broke out by reviving the deadpan '60s proto-goth icon Wednesday Addams in *The Addams Family* and *Addams Family Values*, romanced a friendly ghost in *Casper*, and entered the Burton-sphere with 1999's *Sleepy Hollow*. By then the witchy girl was everywhere, forming outcast covens in *The Craft*, fighting supernatural baddies in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Charmed*, all grown up and empowered to destroy abusive boyfriends in *Practical Magic*.

While there have been short-lived resurgences in the 21st century (see: *Twilight*), it's primarily this strain of goth that is driving the current nostalgia fest. September's *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* gives Lydia a brooding teenage daughter of her own in Ryder's closest Gen Z analog, Jenna Ortega. Ortega also plays the title role in

Burton's incredibly popular teen-drama twist on the Addams Family, Netflix's *Wednesday*. An adult Ricci (who has also been revisiting her '90s weird-girl persona in Showtime's *Yellowjackets*), appears appears as one of Wednesday's teachers. Those who crave a more tactile connection with the actor's dark brand can shop Ricci's recent West Elm collab, which features tarot cards. A musical adaptation of *Death Becomes Her*, the 1992 goth-camp comedy that pit Meryl Streep against Goldie Hawn in an orgy of cartoon violence, is about to open on Broadway; Sabrina Carpenter's "Taste" video, also starring Ortega, pays homage to the same movie. And if you just want to watch vintage Ryder, Criterion Channel is honoring her with an October retrospective.

Sequels and reboots and rereleases may be the linchpins of Hollywood's nostalgia-industrial complex, but goth's comeback goes beyond the reanimation of dormant titles. The new Disney+ series *Agatha All Along* is about as original as Marvel shows get. A once-fearsome witch, Kathryn Hahn's *WandaVision* villain Agatha Harkness convenes a makeshift coven to flank her on a perilous journey that might restore her lost powers. The show celebrates and sends up all sorts of witchy archetypes, writing into its lore a '70s singer à la Stevie Nicks and a wellness influencer mixing up toxic potions. Eighties-set teen comedy *Lisa Frankenstein*, released this past winter, finds a misfit girl falling for the gentle Victorian zombie who follows her home from the cemetery. Soundtracked by period-appropriate indie rock, the movie is itself a Frankenstein's monster of influences, from *Beetlejuice* to the 1992 B-movie that kicked off the *Buffy* franchise. Its very existence confirms the longevity of a previous generation's dark teen tropes.

What are we looking for when we flock to these paradoxically pleasurable paeans to monsters and magic, mortality and the afterlife? In an interview with the *Guardian*, Weinstock, the *How to Be a Goth* author, ventured that "there's so much sadness and violence in the world that it's beginning to seep into and shape the culture…. It's a form of escapism but it's also a reality check that reminds us we're living through scary, uncertain times."

I'm not so sure about that. The girly goth talismans we're clinging to now are relics of a more upbeat era, when the economy was coasting and the Cold War was ending and the daughters of second-wave feminists were inventing new ways to inhabit their power. While some of us will always feel the temptation to immerse ourselves in the gloomy and supernatural, the more potent form of escapism at play in this revival is nostalgia for the recent past. One perennial lure of the goth subculture, with its Victorian wardrobe and Expressionist makeup, is its ability to untether adherents from the present. "Goth's interest in the timeless," writes the critic Simon Reynolds in his post-punk history *Rip It Up and Start Again*, "could be seen as precisely that—a refusal of the time*ly*, the topical, the urgent issues of the day." It supplants the sadness and violence we know with dark fairy tales too remote from reality to demand our engagement with real-world problems.

Goth ca. 2024 may not visually resemble the cardigan-core of Taylor Swift's *Folklore*/*Evermore* era, but, like a certain seasonal latte, it's delivering pure comfort. You might notice that *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* feels cozier than its predecessor; while both have the same rural idyll as a backdrop, the sequel de-emphasizes the original's uncomfortable framing of Lydia as a child bride to the titular ghoul in favor of a plot that repairs broken bonds between generations of Deetz women. Or that *Wednesday* is set at a boarding school for outcasts, monsters, and practitioners of magic—shades of *Harry Potter*. Or that *Agatha* eases its underworld odyssey with camp-savvy faces: Hahn, Aubrey Plaza, Patti LuPone. Meanwhile, one recent Gen X goth IP revival that bombed was a convoluted, self-serious reboot of the 1994 revenge fantasy *The Crow*, which earned $9 million at the domestic box office to *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*'s $266 million and counting.

Maybe that's why the most successful of these titles have been hitting like any other fall-sploitation trifle, enjoyable but forgettable, Hallmark Christmas specials for viewers who prefer Halloween. Just as we line up in autumn for an annual round of virus-season vaccines, we might seek out these morbid fantasies, each its own plush sensory overload, as an inoculation against the pain of processing war, misogyny, political upheaval. The

entertainment itself is surprisingly benign. Scarier by far is the impulse that drives us to it.

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