and sun, breezy, high 84. Tonight,

clear, breezy, low 69. **Tomorrow,** Sunny, low humidity, very warm,

MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2024 VOL. CLXXIII .... No. 60,195 © 2024 The New York Times Company

Prices in Canada may be higher

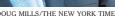
high 89. Weather map, Page D8.

\$4.00



# The 3 Men at the Core of Biden's Brain Trust









From left, Ron Klain, 62, President Biden's former chief of staff; Ted Kaufman, 85, Mr. Biden's longtime Senate chief of staff; and Mike Donilon, 65, a close adviser since the '80s. The three confidants are part of an echo chamber where dissent is rare.

## Amid Diverse Set of Advisers, an Old-School Inner Circle

#### By KATIE ROGERS and MICHAEL D. SHEAR

WASHINGTON Multiple times each day, President Biden dials up Mike Donilon, a close adviser since the 1980s, to chew on the latest polls and headlines.

"What's your instinct? What do vou think?" Mr. Biden will ask Mr. Donilon, who recently left the White House for the campaign's Delaware headquarters.

Once a week, Mr. Biden summons Ron Klain, his former chief of staff, to workshop the best at- the sharks," Mr. Kaufman told him

tacks to use against former President Donald J. Trump as the presidential debate draws closer.

When he leaves for Delaware on weekends, Mr. Biden seeks out Ted Kaufman, a confidant who represents the president's ties to the state that introduced him to the national stage more than a half-century ago.

It was Mr. Kaufman who was brutally direct with Mr. Biden when a plagiarism scandal threatened his first campaign for presi-

"There's only one way to stop

at the time, "and that's pull out." Mr. Biden did.

Interviews with dozens of people close to the president reveal a truth at the heart of Mr. Biden's political life: While he is surrounded by a diverse and multigenerational crowd of campaign operatives, policy experts and cabinet secretaries, he reserves his full trust for a small circle of insiders who are the definition of old school.

The three are at the center of the Biden world, part of an echo chamber where dissent is rare. In important moments, each has told

the president news he did not want to hear, although not one of them said no when the president was considering whether to run for a second term. They are also decades older than the young voters who could decide the election, which worries many of the president's allies.

Mr. Klain is the youngest at 62. Mr. Donilon is 65. Mr. Kaufman is 85, four years older than Mr. Biden. Each has earned the president's trust over not just years but decades. On this last of Mr. Biden's

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# Opening Up Their Private Lives on TV as if Nobody's Watching

## By JULIA JACOBS

One night after a blowout fight with his fiancée, Josh Perez was lying in bed, typing silently on his

phone. He was searching for contacts for the producers behind "Couples Therapy," a documentary series he and his fiancée began watching during the pandemic. The show, which follows real couples in the New York area as they undergo about five months of therapy, had become a conduit for having difficult conversations about their own relationship. Perez hoped that being selected for the show could help them even more.

Months later, Perez and his fiancée, Natasha Marks, sat on a couch inside a soundstage in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Greenpoint. Across from them, on a TV set built to look like a therapist's office, was Orna Guralnik, the psychoanalyst and therapeutic maestro of "Couples Therapy."

"I guess if I was to sum up why we're here," Marks said, searching Perez's face as she spoke, "we just recently had a little baby boy, and our emotional and physical intimacy, for a while, has taken a tank.

Across the show's four seasons — the latest was recently released



Josh Perez and Natasha Marks signed up for "Couples Therapy" after watching the show at home.

on Paramount Plus with Showtime - a total of 20 couples and one polyamorous trio have revealed the kind of intimacies that Marks shared for the dissection of Guralnik and, by extension, a national TV audience. Online, the show has an active fandom that

probes its relationships as if trading gossip inside a friend group. The attention has left most of the show's couples grappling with both anticipated and unexpected consequences of televised ther-

In interviews with six couples

who appeared across the first three seasons, many said the prospect of 20 free hourlong sessions with a therapist whose work they could preview on television was a main draw. Before they applied for the show, India Browne

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# Meta Lured Young Users, Knowing Risks, States Say

## Lawsuits Describe Leaders Rejecting Pleas From Employees for Safeguards

By NATASHA SINGER

In April 2019, David Ginsberg, a Meta executive, emailed his boss, Mark Zuckerberg, with a proposal to research and reduce loneliness and compulsive use on Instagram and Facebook

In the email, Mr. Ginsberg noted that the company faced scrutiny for its products' influence "especially around areas of problematic use/addiction and teens." He asked Mr. Zuckerberg for 24 engineers, researchers and other staff, saying Instagram had a "deficit" on such issues.

A week later, Susan Li, now the company's chief financial officer, informed Mr. Ginsberg that the project was "not funded" because of staffing constraints.

Adam Mosseri, Instagram's head, ultimately declined to finance the project, too, writing in an email: "Unfortunately I don't see us funding this from Instagram any time soon.'

The email exchanges are just one slice of evidence cited among more than a dozen lawsuits filed since last year by the attorneys general of 45 states and the District of Columbia. The states accuse Meta of unfairly ensnaring teenagers and children on Instagram and Facebook while deceiving the public about the hazards. Using a coordinated legal approach reminiscent of the government's pursuit of Big Tobacco in the 1990s, the attorneys general seek to compel Meta to bolster protections for minors.

A New York Times analysis of

the states' court filings — including roughly 1,400 pages of company documents and correspondence filed as evidence by the State of Tennessee — shows how Mr. Zuckerberg and other Meta leaders repeatedly promoted the safety of the company's platforms, playing down risks to young people, even as they rejected employee pleas to bolster youth guard-

rails and hire additional staff. In interviews, the attorneys general of several states suing Meta said Mr. Zuckerberg had led his company to drive user engagement at the expense of child wel-

"A lot of these decisions ultimately landed on Mr. Zuckerberg's desk," said Raúl Torrez, the attorney general of New Mexico. "He needs to be asked explicitly, and held to account explicitly, for the decisions that he's made.'

The state lawsuits against Meta reflect mounting concerns that teenagers and children on social media can be sexually solicited, harassed, bullied, body-shamed and algorithmically induced into compulsive online use. Last Monday, Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the U.S. surgeon general, called for warning labels to be placed on social networks, saying the platforms present a public health risk to young people.

His warning could boost momentum in Congress to pass the Kids Online Safety Act, a bill that would require social media com-

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# Flynn Family Is Getting Rich On Trump Ties

#### By DAVID A. FAHRENTHOLD and ALEXANDRA BERZON

In 2021, retired Gen. Michael T. Flynn, Donald J. Trump's first national security adviser, became chairman of a 75-year-old nonprofit organization — the kind of typically work for free.

But Mr. Flynn received a salary of \$40,000, for working two hours per week.

The next year, he got a raise: \$60,000, for two hours.

Mr. Flynn's charity also paid one of his brothers, two of his sisters, his niece and his sister-inlaw. By the end of its second year, his nonprofit group, America's Future Inc., was running in the red, burning through reserves - and still paying \$518,000, or 29 percent of its budget, to Flynns.

Since leaving the Trump administration under an ethical cloud, Michael Flynn has converted his Trump-world celebrity into a lucrative and sprawling family business. He and his relatives have marketed the retired general as a martyr, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for a legal-defense fund and then pocketing leftover money. Through a network of nonprofit and for-profit ventures, they have sold far-right conspiracy theories, ranging from lies about the 2020 election to warnings, embraced by followers of QAnon, about cabals of pedophiles and child traffickers.

"This is one that goes up to the highest levels of corporations, up to the highest levels of the government," Mr. Flynn said recently at a meeting hosted by America's Future in Kent, Ohio. "People that you know and that you think you respect."

A New York Times investigation found Flynn family members had made at least \$2.2 million Continued on Page A15



Israelis lit candles outside the tomb of the revered sage Baba Sali in Netivot in April.

# Israelis Extend Little Sympathy For Gaza Plight

## By ISABEL KERSHNER

NETIVOT, Israel — The southern Israeli city of Netivot, a working-class hub for mystical rabbis about 10 miles from the Gaza border, escaped the worst of the Hamas-led attack of Oct. 7, a fluke many residents ascribe to miraculous intervention by the Jewish

sages buried here. Nevertheless, many here seem to show little concern about the suffering now of the Palestinian civilians — practically neighbors across the fence in Gaza.

Michael Zigdon, who operates a small food shack in Netivot's rundown market and had employed two men from Gaza until the attack, expressed little sympathy for Gazans, who have endured a ferocious Israeli military onslaught for the past eight months.

"Who wants this war and who doesn't?" Mr. Zigdon said, while mopping up red food dye that had spilled from a crushed-ice drink machine in his shack. "It wasn't us who attacked them on Oct. 7."

Like many Israelis, Mr. Zigdon blamed Hamas for embedding itself in residential areas, endan-

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**INTERNATIONAL A4-9** 

## **Architect of Today's Singapore**

Focusing on community and light, Liu Thai Ker replaced slums with spacious high-rises. The Global Profile. PAGE A8

#### Film Exploring Family Bonds A tear-jerker from Thailand, "How to

Make Millions Before Grandma Dies," has become a surprise hit. PAGE A7 NATIONAL A10-15, 18

# Arkansas Town in Disbelief

The small town of Fordyce was struggling to absorb the shock of a grocery store shooting as details emerged and a fourth victim died.

## **Status of Columbia Protesters**

Alvin Bragg cited a lack of evidence in not prosecuting 31 of 46 demonstrators who were charged. PAGE A15

**OBITUARIES B5** 

#### Spanish Civil War Fighter Ángeles Flórez Peón, 105, was revered

as an essential guardian of the country's memory of war and repression.



SPORTS D1-7

## From a Ball to a Bicycle

Remco Evenepoel of Belgium, a Tour de France contender, switched from soccer when he was 17.

## A Collapse for the Ages?

That is what the Florida Panthers face if they lose Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals after leading, 3-0. PAGE D3 **BUSINESS B1-4** 

Jessica Grose

## A.I. Speeds Drug Development

In high-tech labs, workers are generating data to train A.I. algorithms to design better medicines and do it faster than ever before. The transformation is just getting underway.

# App Fight Divides Two Nations

Japan's SoftBank Group and South Korea's Naver helped bridge geopolitical ties with a joint venture to operate the messaging app Line, but now the partnership is faltering.

**OPINION A16-17** 

PAGE A16



#### A Books-and-Mortar Approach A new library in Manhattan comes with

12 floors of subsidized apartments. It's a good way to build support for housing, Michael Kimmelman writes.

