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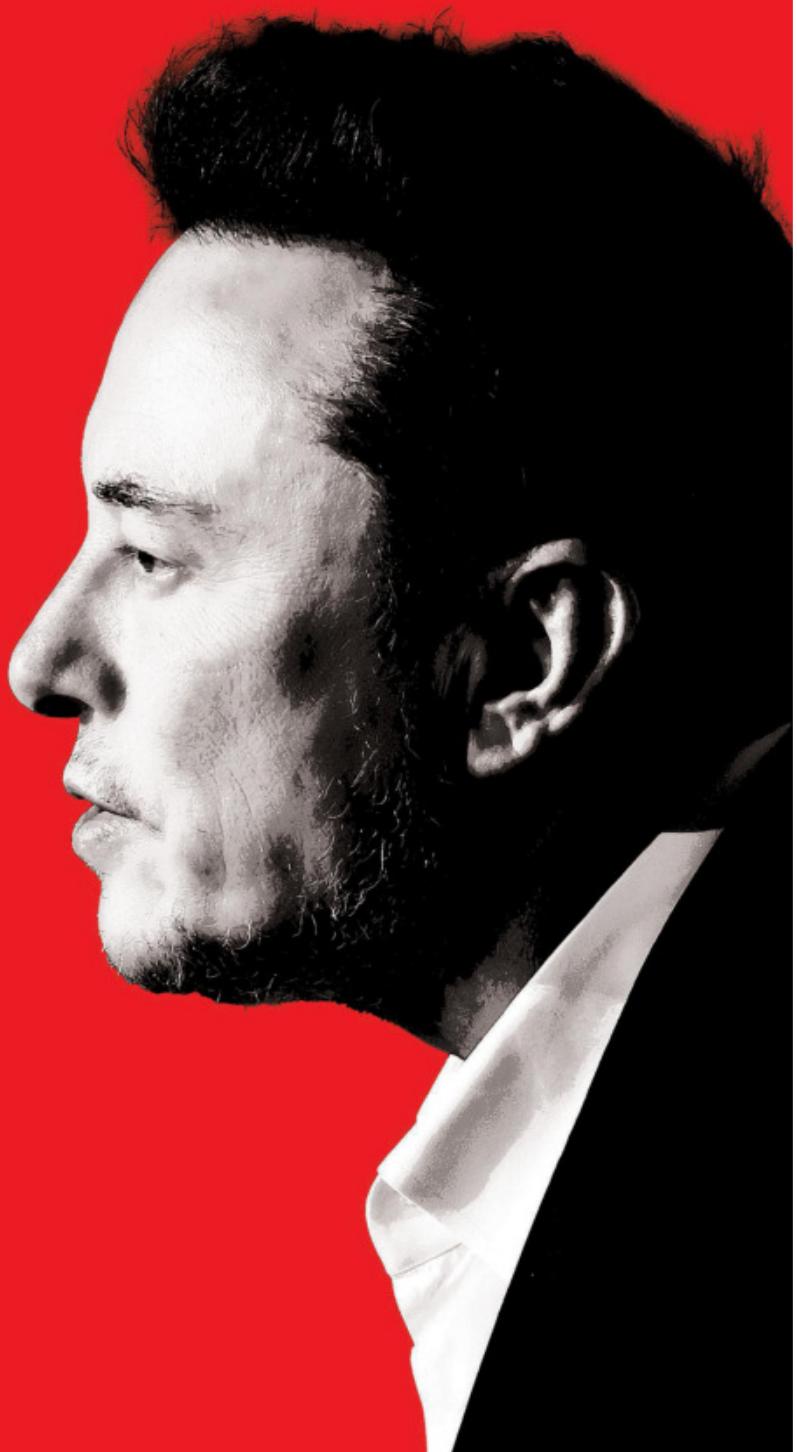
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TIME



CITIZEN MUSK

WHAT'S NEXT ON
HIS TO-DO LIST?

BY SIMON SHUSTER

Mitsubishi Corporation

The Power of Three



As one of Japan's leading companies, Mitsubishi Corporation manages businesses across value chains and industries that meet the needs of a changing world.

Successful investors know that diversity is the cornerstone of resilience, and balanced portfolios can withstand market challenges and enjoy sustainable growth. That is true for businesses as well as individuals, and few companies exemplify this strategy better than Mitsubishi Corporation.

At our founding 70 years ago, Mitsubishi Corporation was an import/export business. What has distinguished us from other firms is our unique evolution. When the economic landscape shifted, we at Mitsubishi Corporation adjusted our business model and transcended our roots as a trading company to become an investor in attractive businesses and industries. As times continued to change, we transformed our business model once again, and actively managed our investments for growth and value creation.

This singular path has made Mitsubishi Corporation Japan's preeminent sogo shosha, distinguishing ourselves by investing in prime assets and businesses across multiple industries. We have captured value by building a strong portfolio of businesses that includes energy, mineral resources, automotive and mobility, food, and other essential industries.

We are boldly embracing the future. As a sogo shosha, Mitsubishi Corporation is well positioned to thrive in this challenging environment of emerging technologies, sweeping transformations and unforeseen disruptions. With businesses on six continents, our capabilities are global. We are determined to help build a more stable and sustainable world. In this dynamic new world, Mitsubishi Corporation will continue to create shared value for investors, for society, and for the future.

Because sharp, strong and brilliant, nothing shines brighter than a diamond - unless it is three diamonds.

Mitsubishi Corporation is built on a core philosophy known as San Ko Ryo, or "The Three Corporate Principles." Mitsubishi means "three diamonds." Our corporate philosophy is built on those three shining pillars.

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Corporate Responsibility to Society

Strive to enrich society, both materially and spiritually, while contributing towards the preservation of the global environment.

"Shoji Komei"

Integrity and Fairness

Maintain principles of transparency and openness, conducting business with integrity and fairness.

"Ritsugyo Boeki"

Global Understanding Through Business

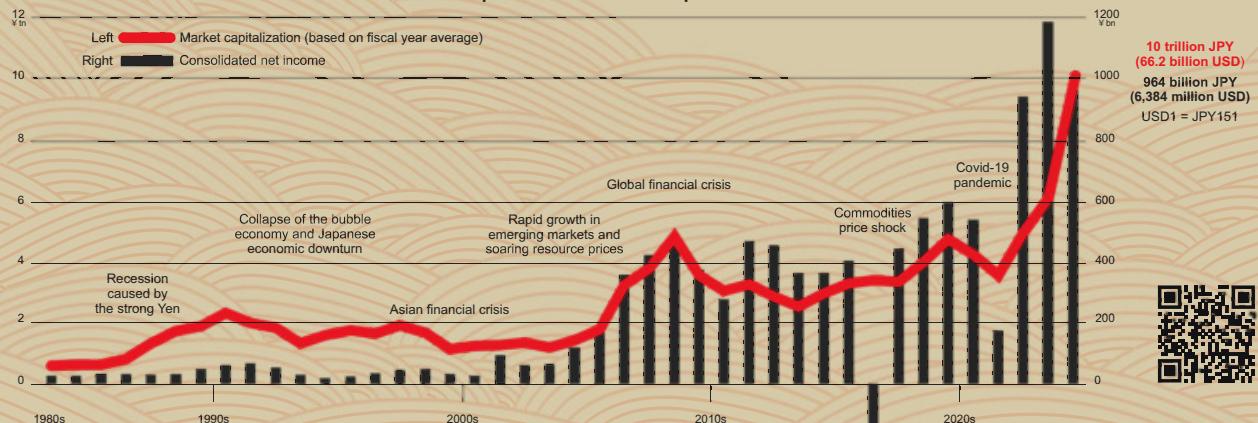
Expand business, based on an all-encompassing global perspective.

(The modern day interpretation of the Three Corporate Principles, as agreed on at the Mitsubishi Kinyokai meeting of the companies that constitute the so-called Mitsubishi group in January 2001.)

Distribution of Net Income FY2023



Mitsubishi Corporation's market capitalization





54

Photos of the Year

TIME's photo editors highlight the illuminating, moving—and sometimes surprising—images that defined 2024

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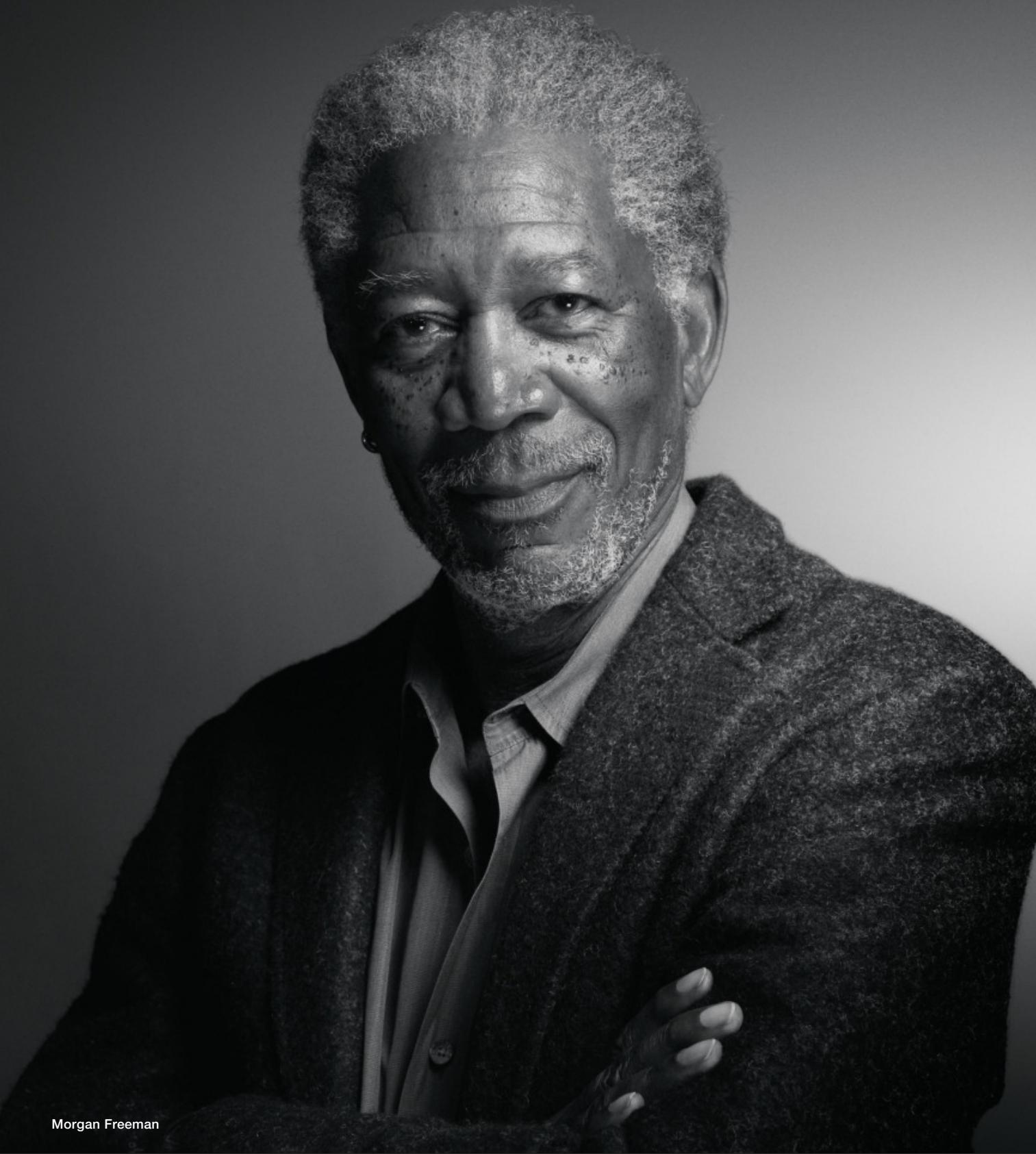
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Las Vegas' Sphere arena—programmed with a feline exterior display—is visible through a Monorail window on Feb. 4
Photograph by Sinna Nasseri—The New York Times/Redux



Morgan Freeman

Grand Siècle Laurent-Perrier



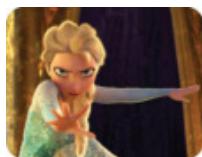
It takes time to become an icon

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Talking climate

TIME hosted two events in Baku, Azerbaijan, during the U.N. COP29 climate summit. Above, a Nov. 13 TIME100 Impact Dinner on leadership—presented by Fortescue and MOL—featured, from left, Eileen O'Connor, Hafsat Abiola, Jacqueline Novogratz, Karen Fang, TIME's chief climate officer Shyla Raghav, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, and Aimée Christensen. At right, TIME senior correspondent Justin Worland moderated a talk on the intersection of business and climate sponsored by Mastercard, featuring Anila Gopal, Aadith Moorthy, Abiola, and Ellen Jackowski.



LISTEN UP

With the movie musical *Moana 2* hitting theaters on Nov. 27, visit TIME.com for our ranking of the 50 best original Disney songs ever. The list includes hits from Disney classics, like *Dumbo's "Baby Mine"* (1941), and more contemporary films, like *Frozen's "Let It Go"* (2013). See the full list at time.com/disney-songs

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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

In "The Age of Scams" (Sept. 30), we misstated how Kitboga said he gets payback against scammers; he did not say he accesses their computers.



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The Brief



THE CLIMATE VACUUM

BY JUSTIN WORLAND/BAKU

A U.S. retreat won't stop global climate efforts, but even the leaders who met at COP29 don't know what's coming next

INSIDE

WHY THERE'S STILL NO NEED TO PANIC
ABOUT THE SPREAD OF BIRD FLU

UFO HEARINGS MAKE THE CASE FOR
PUTTING THE TRUTH OUT THERE

SITTING DOWN WITH BANGLADESH'S
NOBEL-WINNING INTERIM LEADER

THE ANNUAL U.N. CLIMATE-CHANGE SUMMITS are always a little crazy: tens of thousands of delegates descending on a far-flung city for two weeks of discussion on the future of climate policy. This time around, the conference—known this year as COP29—was nothing short of surreal. In Baku, Azerbaijan, you could take a five-minute walk from the luxurious Russian pavilion, where delegates sipped tea on sofas amid human-size Russian dolls, to the Ukrainian pavilion, decorated with a solar panel destroyed by Russian armaments. At most COPs, attendees look for heads of state or celebrities; in Baku, delegates watched for the Taliban—Afghanistan's delegation. In the first week, the Argentinian delegation returned home at the direction of the country's right-wing President; the French Environment Minister did not attend because of a diplomatic dispute with the host country. And the entire event began with Azerbaijan's President describing fossil fuels as "a gift from God."

But nothing made COP29 more surreal than its timing. With the summit's opening coming days after the U.S. election, President-elect Donald Trump served as context for every conversation. The U.S. has for decades played a pivotal role in shaping the talks, brokering key agreements and, most recently, helping to show that the global economy is decarbonizing. From the conference outset, John Podesta, President Joe Biden's climate envoy, offered a blunt assessment. "It's clear that the next Administration will try to take a U-turn," he said. "I'm keenly aware of the disappointment that the United States has at times caused."

In a way, this climate moment is very dangerous. The talks were contentious, with the topic of how to finance the climate transition dividing negotiators. In a moment when we can feel the effects of climate-linked extreme weather, a stagnation in multilateral efforts clearly doesn't help. But there are also reasons for reassurance in Baku. Decarbonization has moved from a theoretical question, delineated in bold but toothless commitments, to a phenomenon occurring in the world's economy—from the small enterprises adapting to sustainability rules to multibillion-dollar investments from the world's biggest firms. Indeed, the questions emerging from Baku are less about whether the international climate push will go on but about how.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS that struck me upon arriving in Baku was how much the vehicles on the street have changed since I was last there seven years ago. At the time, white Soviet-era Ladas seemed to dominate the

roads. This time around, the old-school cars were largely absent. Instead, I noticed the prevalence of Chinese electric vehicles. Baku's EVs offered a small reminder that the energy transition is already changing the world—and not just in major economies. In 2016, when Trump was first elected, delegates at that year's U.N. climate conference wondered if the Paris Agreement—and the decarbonization push it was meant to catalyze—could survive. That's not a question in 2024.

To some degree, the confidence comes in part from evidence from Trump's first term. Many businesses actually accelerated their commitment to climate action in spite of Trump. And cities and states said they would step up their climate push. Washington Governor Jay Inslee, citing state actions, put it to me bluntly: "Donald Trump is going to be a speed bump on the march to a clean-energy economy."

But perhaps more important is the massive investment that has begun over the course of the past eight years. Across the globe, many of the world's largest companies have spent billions to facilitate the build-out of clean-technology infrastructure. "No one country can stop progress," says Catherine McKenna, a former Canadian Environment Minister. "I said that last time [Trump was elected], but it's even more true because now it's in the real economy."

But the bigger question for delegates remains how the ongoing transition will play out globally. Which countries will win and lose? How will the most vulnerable fare? And will the transition happen fast enough to avoid the worst effects? Indeed, these issues led to arguments

at COP29. With tensions high in Baku, some of the most prominent voices in the climate world—including former U.N. climate chief Christiana Figueres and climate scientist Johan Rockstrom—dropped an open letter calling for reforms. Host countries should face tougher selection criteria, they argued, and the process should be streamlined.

The postelection timing was unstated in the letter, but it wasn't coincidental. Regardless of whether Trump pulls the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement for a second time, the climate world will be left with a vacuum. Many negotiators have said that the U.S. international climate posture never amounted to real climate leadership. Even under supportive Presidents like Biden and former President Barack Obama, the U.S. shaped agreements with American politics in mind, even if it weakened the deals, and struggled to deliver climate aid. Even so, for many, the U.S. will be missed when it's gone. □

'Trump is going to be a speed bump on the march to a clean-energy economy.'

—JAY INSLEE,
GOVERNOR OF
WASHINGTON

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Northeast on fire

The Jennings Creek wildfire burns in Greenwood Lake, N.Y., on Nov. 10. The Northeast has faced unusually dry weather conditions this fall; New York City didn't record any significant rainfall in all of October. Drought conditions have fueled hundreds of wildfires across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut—states that have rarely in the past seen these types of blazes.

THE BULLETIN

Trump's deportation plans promise the return of workplace raids

JUST OVER A YEAR INTO DONALD TRUMP'S FIRST TERM AS PRESIDENT, immigration agents raided a meat-processing plant in Bean Station, Tenn., arresting 104 workers. It was the largest worksite raid in a decade. In his second term, Trump—who promised on the campaign trail to launch the largest deportation effort in U.S. history—plans to bring back the raids, after President Biden largely ended such tactics. “Worksite operations have to happen,” Tom Homan, Trump’s incoming “border czar,” said recently. But while raids generate headlines, experts say their actual impact can be smaller than it may seem.

WHAT THE GOP WANTS During Trump’s first term, deportations peaked at

347,000 in the 2019 budget year. To get even higher numbers, the second Trump Administration may decide to address the backlog of some 3 million cases in the immigration courts, or it could hire more agents to locate hundreds of thousands of people still in the U.S. who have been ordered removed. Compared with those tactics, worksite raids are expensive, resource-intensive operations that are likely to be less effective. They could also cause a clash with pro-business forces within the Republican Party.

WHAT RAIDS ACHIEVE... But, argues Eric Ruark of NumbersUSA, a group that advocates for reducing immigration overall, the publicity that accrues to workplace raids makes them

worthwhile: “It also sends a message to people who might want to come that there’s not going to be the opportunity to work in the United States because they don’t have authorization.”

...AND WHAT THEY DON'T After that 2018 raid in Tennessee, workers sued for civil rights violations and were awarded a \$1 million settlement. Some were also granted legal status as part of the settlement terms. The meat-processing plant is still operating. Michelle Lapointe, legal director for the American Immigration Council, says her group is preparing to defend workers if raids ramp up. “They promised to carry these out again,” she says, “and we take them at their word, unfortunately.” —BRIAN BENNETT

GOOD QUESTION

Is it time for Americans to worry about bird flu?

BY JAMIE DUCHARME

H5N1 AVIAN INFLUENZA, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS bird flu, has infected more than 100 million birds in the U.S. and almost 500 dairy-cattle herds across 15 states. The virus has popped up in mammals including elephant seals, goats, foxes, and house cats. But despite its prolific spread among animals, federal health authorities maintain that the risk to the U.S. public remains low. There have been only 46 confirmed human cases in the U.S. during the current outbreak. All but one of those people had a known exposure to affected poultry or cattle, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and all of their illnesses were mild. The CDC says there is no proof that the virus is spreading from person to person at this time.

Recent news, however, has some people feeling uneasy. On Nov. 12, Canadian health officials announced that an otherwise healthy teenager there who caught bird flu from an unknown source is in critical condition, underscoring the illness's possible severity—and its sometimes mysterious spread.

In October, the U.S. Department of Agriculture also raised alarms when it announced that a pig in Oregon tested positive. That's worrying, because pigs can be infected with swine, human, and bird-flu viruses, making them prime "mixing vessels," says Meghan Davis, an associate professor of environmental health and engineering at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. If a pig were infected with multiple types of influenza at the same time, the viruses could potentially combine to form a new strain capable of spreading widely among humans, Davis explains. That happened during the 2009 "swine flu" pandemic. "There are a lot of things I worry about," Davis says. "This is one."

Another cause for concern: as seasonal influenza virus goes around, "humans, ourselves, could be a mixing vessel," Davis says. If a person were simultaneously infected with bird flu and seasonal flu, the two viruses could theoretically combine to create a more transmissible strain.

THE GOOD NEWS is that, as of now, there's no evidence that the avian virus has undergone changes significant enough to easily infect and spread among humans, says Troy Sutton, an assistant professor of veterinary and biomedical sciences at Penn State University.

Why have some people gotten sick at all, if the virus

isn't good at infecting humans? After major exposure—a farmworker in close contact with sick animals, say—the virus can get into human cells, Sutton says. But the virus doesn't seem to have evolved in a way that makes it easy to transmit. That's in part because the bird-flu virus—unlike the seasonal flu—doesn't grow well in the upper airways, which might make it less transmissible among humans through typical routes like coughing and sneezing, Sutton says.

That's not to say respiratory spread is impossible. Two recent studies—one by CDC researchers and one led by a researcher from the University of Wisconsin-Madison—raised that possibility. The researchers isolated bird-flu virus from the first person sickened

in the current outbreak and found that it could spread among ferrets via droplets. But there are important caveats. Ferrets—while commonly used in influenza research—are not a perfect parallel for humans. And the studied strain is similar but not identical to the one spreading widely among cows. Overall, the CDC concluded, "the virus still is not capable of spreading efficiently among people via respiratory droplets compared to seasonal influenza viruses."

Still, health authorities are getting ready. In October, the U.S. Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response gave \$72 million to drug companies that make H5 influenza vaccines, directing them to use the funds to get shots prepped "should they be needed now or in the future."

Getting a regular seasonal flu shot does not protect against bird flu, but it's a good idea to get one anyway—especially for people who work or regularly come into contact with animals. There's not much else for the general public to do at this point. Just refrain from drinking raw milk (since the virus can persist without pasteurization) and avoid touching dead or sick animals, health officials say. □



A worker collects a blood sample from a calf at the National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa, on July 31

There is no proof that the virus is spreading from person to person

TIME

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A photograph showing a tablet displaying a news article from TIME.com. The article is titled "Mistral AI CEO Arthur Mensch on Microsoft, Regulation, and Europe's AI Ecosystem". Below the title is a large photo of a man with dark hair, Arthur Mensch, sitting and speaking. The tablet screen also shows the TIME logo and some smaller text. To the right of the tablet, there is a white cup of coffee, an open notebook with a pen resting on it, and a small potted plant with green leaves in a brown pot. The background is a solid dark blue color.

THE BRIEF MILESTONES



RELEASED

New guidance for teens and screens

A novel approach

SCREENS ARE PART OF MODERN TEENAGE life—but there are almost no guardrails around what they see. While online videos can educate and connect young people, some content harms their emotional and psychological development.

Now, for the first time, experts from the American Psychological Association (APA) on Nov. 20 issued guidance for how parents, educators, platforms, and policymakers can ensure that videos have more positive than negative effects on teen health. “We are not doing enough, in my opinion, to prepare kids for how to live in the digital environment,” says Mitch Prinstein, the APA’s chief science officer.

In addition to limiting screen time, parents are recommended to learn

what their kids are watching—then guide them toward educational and potentially helpful content and away from videos that focus on negative behaviors like cyberhate, bullying, and stereotyping.

Digital literacy should become a bigger part of school curriculums. Teachers can educate teens about how to become smarter content consumers and how the adolescent brain works, so they can understand how social media and other platforms might prey on their vulnerabilities. The APA experts call on platforms to rein in algorithms and auto-play features that encourage excessive viewing, along with targeted ads. And policymakers should consider ways to protect privacy, including requiring platforms to enable teen profiles that provide greater parental control. “This is the first step to say that we know a whole lot about video content and kids’ development,” Prinstein says. “Let’s start following the science and start putting teens’ health first.” —ALICE PARK

VANISHED

Freshwater reserves

A troubling dip

Earth is home to more than 14 million cu. mi. of fresh water. With so much of it sloshing around, you wouldn’t think we’d miss 290 cu. mi. But a new study, published Nov. 4 in *Surveys in Geophysics*, found that’s how much fresh water has vanished since 2015—the equivalent of 2½ Lake Eries.

Satellites were able to detect that the gravitational tug of earth’s freshwater bodies has been lower than average in the past decade; dips are normal, but these levels aren’t rebounding. The reason? Climate change, as droughts can prevent rain from replenishing the soil. With 8.1 billion people relying on freshwater reserves for drinking, cooking, bathing, farming, and more, we need every drop we can get. —Jeffrey Kluger



FILED

Spirit Airlines, for bankruptcy protection, on Nov. 18. Since 2020, the airline has lost more than \$2.2 billion, but the low-cost carrier said flights would continue departing as planned.

REOPENING

► The Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, on Dec. 7. The architectural icon has been closed to the public since a devastating 2019 fire; the reopening will include a broadcast ceremony.



ISSUED

Arrest warrants, by the International Criminal Court, for Israeli and Hamas officials, including Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, on Nov. 21, on accusations of crimes against humanity.

WITHDRAWN

His name from consideration for AG, Matt Gaetz said Nov. 21. The former Congressman, who denies wrongdoing, has faced a DOJ sex-trafficking investigation and House ethics probe.

SPACE

Inside Capitol Hill's latest UFO hearings

BY JEFFREY KLUGER

AMERICANS HAD A PANDEMIC ON THEIR MINDS IN 2020 when then President Donald Trump signed a \$2.3 trillion COVID-19 relief bill. Tucked inside the legislation was another bit of business entirely—a provision requiring the Pentagon to investigate more than 120 sightings by military pilots of what used to be known as UFOs, and now go by the more decorous-sounding “unidentified anomalous phenomena” (UAP). Lawmakers wrote the requirement into the must-pass law in the hope that it might help explain cockpit footage that the Navy had declassified earlier that year.

The Department of Defense released the mandated report in 2021, analyzing both the video evidence and eyewitness accounts of flying objects moving in all manner of ways that defy conventional aeronautics—loop-the-looping and changing directions with a nimbleness no existing technology could manage. The military’s verdict? A shrug. The objects weren’t domestic, but whether they belonged to a hostile foreign power—terrestrial or otherwise—was impossible to say.

Inauguration Day for Trump’s second term is more than two months away, but when the once-and-future President returns to Washington, he’ll find the mystery of UAPs again there waiting for him.

ON NOV. 13, two subcommittees of the House Oversight Committee held a joint hearing provocatively titled Unidentified Anomalous Phenomena: Exposing the Truth, during which they heard from four witnesses making the case that American skies are indeed being plied by un-American—and quite possibly unearthly—machines.

“Let me be clear,” testified Luis Elizondo, a former military intelligence official who once ran a Pentagon program investigating the unexplained sightings, “UAP are real. Advanced technologies not made by our government or any other government are monitoring sensitive military installations around the globe. Furthermore, the U.S. is in possession of UAP technologies, as are some of our adversaries. I believe we are in the midst of a multidecade, secretive arms race, one funded by misallocated taxpayer dollars, and hidden from our elected representatives.”

Elizondo was not the only witness to charge that officials are playing cute with what they know about the origin of UAPs. Retired rear admiral Tim Gallaudet was on deployment in January 2015 when one of the cockpit videos that were declassified in 2020 was first captured. According to his testimony, he and a handful of other naval officers received

an email with the video attached—an email that vanished from their inboxes “without explanation” the next day. The anomalous object, he said, exhibited “flight and structural characteristics unlike anything in our arsenal.” For Gallaudet, the content of the video, not to mention its disappearance—presumably by the same government officials who sent it in the first place—served as “confirmation that UAPs are interacting with humanity.”

Some of the most sensational claims of the two-hour session came from journalist Michael Shellenberger, founder of the news site Public on the Substack platform, who submitted 214 pages of testimony into evidence. In October, he published an article alleging that the government was running what he described in his testimony as “an active and highly secretive” program called Immaculate Constellation, which includes “hundreds, maybe thousands” of images and videos of UAPs.

Michael Gold, a former NASA associate administrator and a member of the space agency’s UAP independent study team, weighed in too. “Science requires data which should be collected without bias or prejudice,” he testified, “yet when the topic of UAP arises, those who wish to explore the phenomena are met by resistance and ridicule.”

That’s not only a disservice to public knowledge, but a risk to public safety as well. “There is a national-security need for more UAP transparency,” Gallaudet said. “In 2025, the U.S. will spend over \$900 billion on national defense, yet we still have an incomplete understanding of what is in our airspace.”

Whatever the unexplained technology is, the witnesses stressed, it is the government’s responsibility not just to figure out its origin, but also to share what it learns with the taxpaying public. “The intelligence community is treating us like children,” Shellenberger testified. “It’s time for us to know the truth about this. I think that we can handle it.” □



A UAP seen through the windscreens of a U.S. Navy fighter jet in 2015

‘Let me be clear. UAP are real.’

—LUIS ELIZONDO,
FORMER
INTELLIGENCE
OFFICIAL

5 ways to embrace winter—even if you usually dread it

BY ANGELA HAUPT

WHEN KARI LEIBOWITZ MOVED TO the Arctic in 2014, she braced herself for the impact of long, dark, cold winters. The temperature in Tromso, Norway, hovers around 20°F for eight months of the year, during which time it snows daily. Surely the wind would slap her face and unshoveled snow would sneak down her boots, wetting her socks. But she expected an emotional impact too, akin to plunging headfirst into a deep pool of the winter blues. Most distressing, she assumed, would be the polar night: a two-month stretch during which the sun doesn't rise above the horizon.

Leibowitz, a health psychologist, made the Arctic her home in order to study at the world's northernmost university. At first, she planned to dive into what was driving a surprising lack of seasonal affective disorder in Norway: Were the people there immune in some way to what she saw as an inherently depressing season? But her new neighbors kept telling her how much they were looking forward to winter. "I started feeling like, OK, it's not really enough to just focus on a lack of depression," she says. "It didn't make sense to just have this idea of why people were protected against this negative thing, and to not have a conversation about the positives."

In her new book, *How to Winter*, Leibowitz lets people in on the secret about how to not just tolerate frigid, dark days, but also to thrive during them. It comes down to mindset, or the beliefs and attitudes that shape how we think and behave. During her year in Tromso, Leibowitz fell in love with the winter season, and she believes we all have the ability to do the same. "We can start shaping our own mindset intentionally and deliberately," she says.

With that in mind, we asked Leibowitz and other experts to share their favorite ways to embrace the cold months ahead.



1. Change your lighting

Natural light—which you can replicate with full-spectrum light bulbs—improves emotional well-being and lowers levels of the stress hormone cortisol, Totten says. Try adding more of it to spaces where you spend a lot of time, like your living room or kitchen. If you want to promote focus, you can opt for cool light, like blue or white tones, while warmer light, which ranges from yellow to orange, will help you relax.

2. Make a winter to-do list

Vermont therapist Rachel Totten challenges anyone dreading the sleepy winter months to make a bucket list full of fun goals: going snowshoeing, creating an 8-ft.-tall snowman, picking up an indoor hobby like crocheting, baking cookies for the whole block. "Ask yourself, What would you want to do in this slowness?" she says. "It's a fun way to bring a sense of excitement to the colder months."

3. Tap into scent

Totten recommends surrounding yourself with scents that trigger positive memories, like a fresh balsam candle that smells like the Christmas-tree farm you looked forward to visiting as a kid. Every year around this time, she starts burning a candle that reminds her of the scent that filled her grandparents' home: eucalyptus and mint. "It brings this sense of peace and calm and connectedness," she says.

4. Commit to more time outside

Make a vow to spend 15 minutes more than you usually would outside each day during the winter, Leibowitz suggests—perhaps enjoying your morning coffee on the front porch or taking an after-dinner walk. "Movement, fresh air, and connection with nature are all natural antidepressants," she says. "If you can spend extra time outdoors, that's going to counteract the feeling of the winter blues."

5. Speak kindly about the weather

No matter where they are in the world, people make small talk about the weather. And usually, they're complaining. "That reaches new heights in the winter, and it really draws our attention to the negative aspects of the season," Leibowitz says. That's why she recommends challenging yourself to spend a week making winter-positive small talk with at least one person a day. "It trains you to notice different kinds of things, which makes a big difference," she says.



Smashing Glass Ceilings – and Leaving A Ladder Behind

Rita Case is not one to shy away from a challenge. If anything, being told she can't achieve something only makes her more committed to smashing through any glass ceiling in the way of her professional ascent.

Having grown up in her dad's dealership in Santa Rosa, California, she always felt right at home in the environment of selling cars. From an early age, she realized she wanted to help people make one of the most significant purchases in their lives—while also making the world a better place in the process. In the words of National Automobile Dealers Association Chairman Gary Gilchrist, "Being a part of one of the biggest decisions an individual makes – buying a vehicle – cements your role in their life. That's pretty special." And Rita couldn't get enough of that feeling.

As the first Honda dealer in the country, Rita's father was excited by her ambition to support his entrepreneurial venture and felt honored that she admired him. However, the reality was that there were no women car dealers at the time. Nevertheless, when she got her driver's permit at 15 years old, Rita became one of the first people in the country to drive and sell a Honda car, despite being told that women don't sell cars.

Her trailblazing nature in the industry paid off in more ways than one – in fact, she even met her husband at a meeting for Honda dealers.

"From a dealer's daughter, I became a dealer's wife," Rita explained. She moved with her husband, Rick, to Akron, Ohio, and pressed onward toward her dream. "I wanted to prove a woman could be a car dealer. Against all odds, I continued to push forward."

But it wasn't easy picking up in an entirely new place. "I had to start all over making a name for myself, getting respect in the industry - in his business," she explained. "I'd already done that in my town, already the general manager and the dealer for my dad's store."

Rick and Rita's strategy was similar to her father's. Just as he launched Honda's expansion into the U.S., Rick and Rita were committed to launching franchises as new car makers entered North American markets.

"We wanted to grow the business, so we took franchises that had never been introduced here before. Instead of trying to buy dealerships – which we didn't have the capital to do – we were the first Isuzu dealer. The first Mitsubishi dealer. The first Hyundai dealer. The first Acura dealer."

And that's how they became the largest-volume auto dealership in the country. But it hasn't been an easy road.

As the Covid-19 pandemic began to rock the U.S. in March 2020, Rick was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

"He had no symptoms. It was a cancer they did not have a drug for, or a cure, and we knew he was going to pass away."

For 55 years, the TIME Dealer of the Year program has honored one outstanding automotive dealer who goes above and beyond for their customers, their businesses and – most of all – their communities. Finalists are selected from across the entire industry by the National Automobile Dealers Association, as leaders who have truly changed the world around them through philanthropic efforts.

"Every year I watch the TIME Dealer of the Year presentation and know that any of the nominees on the stage could easily be the national winner," Gary shared. "They are all leaders at home, whether that's serving on their school boards, funding their hospitals, or supporting veterans. Our industry has a strong tradition of giving back – and that is evident in both the quality of the philanthropists and the quantity."

“Our industry has a strong tradition of giving back – and that is evident in both the quality of the philanthropists and the quantity.”

Bigt Case TIME Dealer of the Year, 2024

Yet Rick still stayed positive, Rita says. "There was no 'why me?' from Rick. It was: 'I'm writing my last chapter. Let's do it,'" she explained. "And I respected that."

Rick urged Rita to carry on his professional legacy. "There's no one else who can keep me #1," he told her. "And I know you can do it."

Rick's legacy left an indelible mark on the community as a couple, in both business and philanthropy. Rick and Rita spent decades giving back to their community together. Rita became deeply involved with the Boys and Girls Clubs, where she developed a passion for helping kids stay focused on their education in order to graduate on time. She personally expanded clubs from three to fifteen locations in Fort Lauderdale, FL, creating chances for kids to be exposed to vocational training and career opportunities outside of college – from marketing and news reporting, to carpentry and the culinary arts.

"I think those kids are all my kids. I want to show them a path, an opportunity. They needed to know that they can be somebody," shares Rita. It's why when Rita was named the 2024 TIME Dealer of the Year, she donated the funds to the Boys and Girls Club.

With so many outstanding and service-oriented dealers worth celebrating – it's a reflection of the industry's culture. "Dealers play a significant role in their respective communities. Their engagement [includes] economic support, sponsorship of community groups and events, charitable giving, relationships with customers and employees, and job creation."

The winner receives grant money from Ally Financial to commit to any 501c3 charitable organization of their choosing. After more than 10 years as the corporate sponsor of this program, Ally has ultimately poured nearly a million dollars into dealers' communities.

"No other recognition comes close," Rita notes. "To be named the most accomplished car dealer for my customer satisfaction, my community service, my professionalism, my results, my longevity in the business, my commitment to the business... there is nothing bigger. I feel like I've got the brass ring."

To learn more about the TIME Dealer of the Year nominees and their philanthropic contributions and achievements, visit TIMEdealeroftheyear.com.

Erick Anderson
Shawn Ball
Sean P. Baxter
Michael Brown
Brandon Campbell
Kirk Carroll
Jim Casey
W. Kevin Collins
Rick Curia
Daniel Dagesse
John Deery Jr.
Shaun Del Grande
Brady Dolan
Ivette Dominguez Drawe
Matt Einspahr
Raymond L. Farabaugh
Mark Fox
Randy Fusz
Alan Gamblin
Kevin Grover
Andy Guelcher
George Haddad
Robert Hager
Julie Herrera

Wanda Howell
Bradford Jacobs
Gary Kaminsky
Michael LaFontaine
Eric Lane
Lori Lum
Colin MacLean
A. Foster McKissick III
Trudy Moody
Neill Nelson
Con Paulos
Mark Pellegrino
Dave Perno
Elyse Puklich
Michael Rouen
Roger Scholfield
Roger Smart Jr.

Cathy Stender
Joe Street
Farrar Vaughan
Andrew Walser
Perry Max Webb II
Jon Weese
Dave Wilson
Karl J. Zimmermann Jr.

exceptionally

Let's have a round of applause for 2025's TIME Dealer of the Year nominees! Their outstanding commitment to their dealerships and greater communities inspires us all to be a better ally.

allydealerheroes.com



WORLD

The race to reform a country at a crossroads

BY CHARLIE CAMPBELL/DHAKA

DHAKA LOOKS REBORN AFTER A FRESH LICK OF PAINT, but this is not your typical municipal spruce-up. The sprawling Bangladeshi capital has been festooned with garish political murals celebrating August's student-led ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed. Mile upon mile of concrete balustrades are daubed with expletives and caricatures of the deposed autocrat with fangs and devil horns.

Some of the language doesn't sit easily with 84-year-old Muhammad Yunus, though he can forgive the students' exuberance. "These young minds are full of ideas and ambitions and aspirations," he tells TIME with a chuckle. "They depicted their future in those murals, and it's something much greater than Bangladesh has ever seen."

The task of turning those aspirations into reality now falls to Yunus, who was tapped to serve as "chief adviser" to the interim government—for all intents and purposes, Bangladesh's new leader. His job is to shepherd South Asia's second biggest economy, a nation of over 170 million people, toward fresh elections. Meanwhile, a six-pronged reform process is under way, focusing on the election system, police administration, judiciary, anticorruption commission, public administration, and national constitution.

Around 1,500 people were killed in clashes between protesters and security forces in July and August, amid unrest that began with peaceful demonstrations against employment quotas for regime loyalists. The government's heavy-handed response ignited a powder keg of rage against inequality and political repression that brought tens of thousands of mothers and daughters, bankers and beggars, united onto the street.

The last the world saw of Hasina was as she was being bundled into a helicopter with protesters closing in. As intruders ransacked her official residence, carrying away keepsakes, she floated through the smoggy skies to India, from whence she rails against her ouster. Yunus revealed that he would be seeking her extradition after prosecutors issued a warrant for her part in the violence, though few believe Indian PM Narendra Modi would comply.

"Not only is she being hosted by India, the worst part is that she's talking, which causes a lot of problems for us," he says. "It makes people very unhappy to hear that voice."

YUNUS GREW TO GLOBAL RENOWN in the 1970s for pioneering poverty-reducing microcredit. What began with a single \$5 loan to a woman weaving bamboo stools in his home city of Chittagong has since spread to over 100 countries and even the U.S. Over four decades, Yunus' Grameen Bank has disbursed some \$37 billion in collateral-free loans to over 10 million of the world's poorest people; more than 94% of the loans worldwide have gone to women.

It's work that won Yunus the sobriquet Banker to the



▲
Yunus in
Dhaka on
Nov. 17

Poor as well as the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009, and the Congressional Gold Medal a year later. But Donald Trump's impending return to the White House has engendered a sense of deep anxiety, given the President-elect has railed on X about supposed "barbaric violence" during the revolution that left Bangladesh in a "total state of chaos." Prominent Bangladeshis with ties to Hasina are understood to be lobbying him to impose sanctions. Yunus, who counts Hillary Clinton as a close friend, is confident he can find common ground with the President-elect despite their divergent worldviews. "Trump is a businessman; we are in business," he says. "We are not asking for free money; we want a business partner."

It's a race to enact meaningful reforms before the clamor for fresh elections reaches fever pitch. Yunus knows that improving livelihoods is the only sure way to buy the necessary time to rebuild state institutions, so autocracy can never return—in a new Bangladesh that prospers long after those murals have peeled. "Reform is the core of the whole revolution," says Yunus. "That's why we call it Bangladesh 2.0." □

'We call it Bangladesh 2.0.'

—MUHAMMAD YUNUS, CHIEF ADVISER TO THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

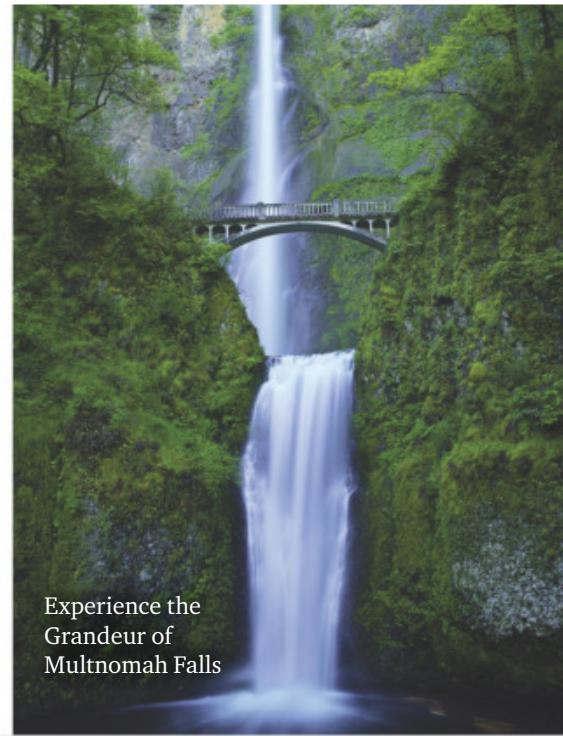


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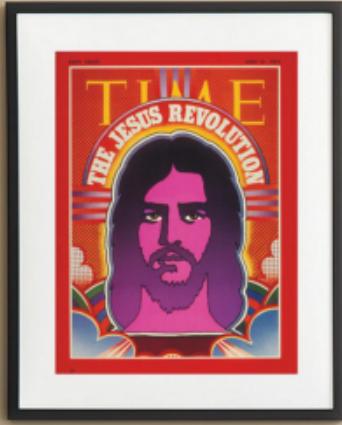


Deep trouble

A person wades through floodwater on Nov. 12 after Typhoon Toraji brought heavy rainfall to the northern Philippine city of Ilagan. The Philippines has been reeling from six major back-to-back storms that have hit the country in a matter of weeks. Toraji downed trees, caused power outages, and triggered small landslides.

Photograph by Noel Celis—AP
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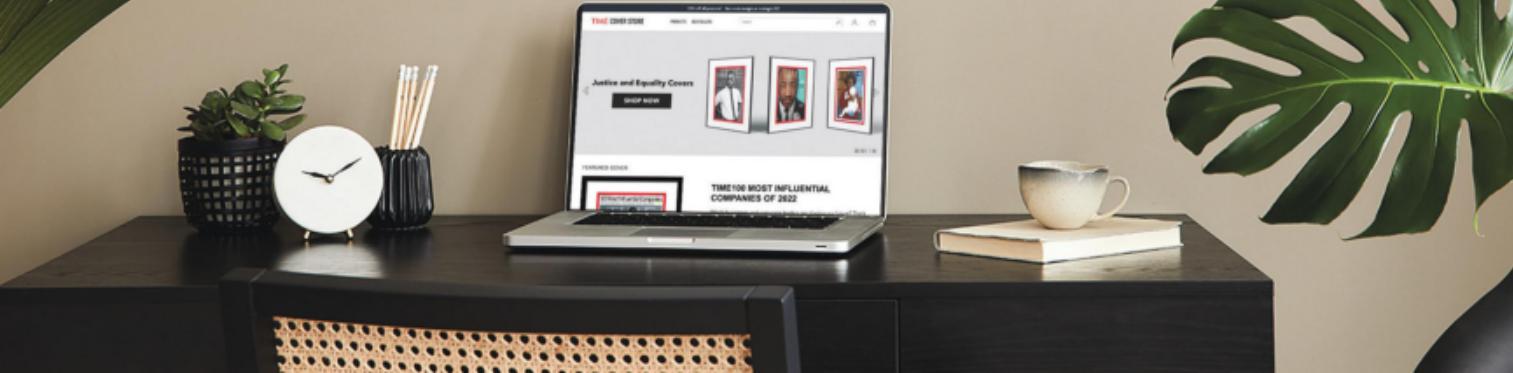
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The View

NATION

MAKE ROOM AT YOUR TABLE

BY CLAIRE BABINEAUX-FONTENOT

Thanksgiving is a time for celebration with our families and communities—but for the millions of Americans who are living with hunger, it can be an intensely difficult reminder of their daily challenges. We may be as divided as ever, but we can agree that no one deserves to be hungry. And there's no better time than the holidays for us to commit to working together to end the food-insecurity epidemic. ▶

INSIDE

STUDY SHOWS ABBREVIATIONS TURN OFF TEXTERS (RLY)

THE RIGHT WAY TO BE VULNERABLE ON A DATE

TURKEY'S ERDOGAN TAKES AIM AT TERM LIMITS

Many intelligent, well-meaning people have succumbed to the idea that “you’re either with us or against us.” It has become possible to forget how much we have in common. But no ideology has a monopoly on values. This year, when our politics have served to divide us intensely, we must find a way to unite with a common purpose: to care for one another.

In October 2018, I had the great privilege to join a network of hundreds of food banks and tens of thousands of food pantries and meal programs as the CEO of Feeding America. Over nearly five years, I’ve met thousands of people: staff, volunteers, and people facing hunger, each with a powerful story. Not a single person asked about my political affiliations.

Hunger transcends party lines. With 47 million people facing hunger in the U.S., it exists in plain sight in every community, whether we choose to see it or not. While food insecurity has become increasingly common, the experiences of those living with it are deeply personal. Seniors are navigating budgets that simply cannot cover their basic needs. Parents are insisting they aren’t hungry at night as they fill their children’s plates with the last of the week’s groceries. Recent veterans feel isolated and misunderstood as they work to reassimilate.

Along with people facing hunger, and often among them, I have also met thousands of people and heard from tens of thousands more who want to help. One of them is Najma, a mother of six. Her husband works full time, and the family does not qualify for benefits, so they sometimes visit food pantries to ensure they have the food they need. Like so many in her position, Najma always finds ways to give back to her community through volunteering, organizing, and advocating.

You see, I haven’t met anyone who has nothing to give. The people in this country are remarkably generous and caring. I love the stories of grandmothers who fed their neighborhoods and teachers who always seemed to have extra sandwiches in their lunch boxes. Their impact is life-changing. When we unite our efforts, and we choose to prioritize



Volunteers capture the spirit of the season by serving up a Thanksgiving meal at the Long Beach Rescue Mission in Long Beach, Calif., last November

ending hunger, we can—and we will—succeed. I can imagine that day. Can you?

IF YOU’VE EVER WITNESSED communities in action after a natural disaster, you understand the power I’m describing. The response to Hurricanes Milton and Helene demonstrated the immediate, widespread efforts to ensure people had what they needed in the aftermath of devastating storms. As a native of Louisiana, I am no stranger to storms. Several years ago, I was visiting Houma, La., in the wake of one, driving in silent solemnity through the devastation. I arrived at a fire station where local relief efforts were coordinated and joined a team of folks preparing and serving jambalaya, a hearty dish that was uniquely comforting to my fellow Louisianans. So many of the people who were gathered had lost so much, yet laughter, hugs, and a feeling of optimism permeated the crowd. It felt hopeful despite the circumstances, because we were all there together. Whatever differences might have existed among us, they were swiftly set aside for one, much higher purpose: to love our neighbors as we love our own.

The Golden Rule is alive and well,

a universal value lived out, however imperfectly, by people at home and at work, in places of worship and in schools, at hospitals and civic centers. I have seen it time and again with my own eyes, and it is beautiful.

How can we unleash our love for our neighbors and start treating hunger like the national disaster that it is? Of the 47 million people who are affected, nearly 14 million are children. We must show them the way forward, together, in a shared conviction that every person deserves nutritious food, that every person deserves love.

What if we each left an open seat at our table for a neighbor this Thanksgiving? Let it serve as a reminder that we need not agree on everything to share a meal, that we need not set aside our own beliefs to care for those who do not share them, and that we need not wait for the aftermath of a storm to show up for our community. We can show up today. And tomorrow. And the day after that. Hunger is all around us, but so is love. That second part—the love part—that’s what I am grateful for this year.

Babineaux-Fontenot is the CEO of Feeding America

DATING

Let's embrace vulnerability in dating

BY LOGAN URY

AS A DATING COACH AND THE DIRECTOR OF RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE AT HINGE, I often hear from people who feel like there's something big they need to disclose on early dates—chronic illness, mental-health struggles, college debt, family estrangement, lack of romantic experience, or trauma. They worry these parts of their lives make them undatable. They don't know how to share this information, and worry they'll be rejected. They tense up on dates, waiting for the inevitable moment when the awkward topic will arise. Or they avoid dates altogether.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Because your vulnerability, when shared intentionally and authentically, can make you feel powerful, not powerless.

Research shows that we're attracted to vulnerability because of what psychologists call the "beautiful mess effect"—a phenomenon in which we tend to judge our own displays of vulnerability more negatively than others do. What feels to us like exposing our weakness through vulnerability, others tend to see as an act of bravery and authenticity.

If you still need convincing, let's look at the numbers. In a survey we conducted at Hinge with over 4,000 daters on the app, we found that 93% of singles are looking for someone who's comfortable being vulnerable. And they're 66% more likely to go on a second date with someone who shows emotional vulnerability on the first date. In fact, a majority say emotional vulnerability is the biggest thing they're looking for on a first date—ranking it higher than attractiveness, income, or height.

Despite this, only a third of people say they show emotional vulnerability on a first date because they're afraid it will be a turnoff. Men, in particular, feel this pressure: 75% say they rarely or never show vulnerability on first dates because they worry it will make them seem weak or undesirable. But here's the thing: The people who reject you for being vulnerable are not your people. Someone who judges you for your past, your struggles, or your truth isn't the right partner for you. The sooner you find that out, the better.

Of course, there's a right way and a wrong way to be vulnerable on an early date. It's a date; not a therapy session. It's about sharing intentionally, with boundaries, from a place of growth and self-awareness. Here's how to tell your story in a way that feels empowering, not overwhelming:

Don't rush. Intimacy needs to be earned. While you may want to get something off your chest, you don't have

to disclose everything on the first date. If someone asks you a question you're uncomfortable with, you can tactfully deflect. For example, let's say you are estranged from your family. If your date tells you all about their mom's famous lasagna recipe, and asks about your parents, you can smile and say, "My family life is messy. We can get into it another time." You can also say your family doesn't have similar traditions and leave it at that.

Explain how this experience made you grow. You are not asking the other person to feel bad for you.

Instead, you're telling them how going through this has helped you become who you are. When you share your narrative from a place of confidence, people will respect you, not reject you.

For example, you can say things like "While I wish I were closer with my family, I've worked hard to create a chosen family of friends, and I'm excited to build my own family one day."

What makes you human is exactly what makes you lovable

Remember that their reaction is about them, not you. Some people will be able to handle your vulnerability, others won't. If they seem uncomfortable or judgmental, that says more about who they are and where they are in life than it does about your datability. This is your story and your experience. You are sharing, not asking for their permission, forgiveness, or acceptance.

Feeling "undatable" is a story we tell ourselves, but it's not the truth. What makes you human—your messy, beautiful story—is exactly what makes you lovable. And when you share your authentic self, you're giving someone else permission to do the same.

Ury is the author of the best-selling book How to Not Die Alone and the dating coach for the new Netflix show The Later Daters, premiering on Nov. 29





FYI: People don't like when you abbreviate texts

By Angela Haupt

HEALTH & WELLNESS EDITOR

It might be time to change your texting habits. According to a recent study, people don't like when you use abbreviations, such as turning *really* into *rly* or firing off a *wyd* (what are you doing?).

These types of abbreviations register as insincere to recipients, who in turn send shorter and fewer responses (if they bother to reply at all). "I was surprised at how significant the negative results were," says study author David Fang, a doctoral student in behavioral marketing at Stanford University. "Abbreviations are quite subtle—they're not really a blatant transgression. But people can see you're taking a shortcut and putting less effort into typing, and that triggers a negative perception."

Fang and his co-authors started off with open minds: abbreviated messages could indicate a lack of effort that might rub people the wrong way, sure, but they might also come across as laid-back and approachable, promoting a greater sense of closeness. To figure out which instinct was right, they used data from thousands of people to conduct a series of experiments, which included asking participants to review their own real conversations. It turned out that no one appreciated shortened words—and that was true across age groups.

You don't have to shun your fav abbreviations entirely, Fang points out, but it's worth considering who's on the other end of your message. If it's someone you need to impress, like a colleague or potential date, spell out those words.



For more health news, sign up for Health Matters at time.com/health-matters



McConnell, here at a news conference at the Capitol on Nov. 6, still has swagger



The D.C. Brief By Philip Elliott

WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT

INSIDE DONALD TRUMP'S ORBIT, it's become a given that the former and future President can bypass Congress to magically fill his Cabinet with the loyalists of his choosing.

That might have been so, if only he didn't want Matt Gaetz and Pete Hegseth as Attorney General and Secretary of Defense, or Tulsi Gabbard overseeing the nation's spy agencies—not to mention RFK Jr. getting anywhere near the CDC. If Trump can't get the support he needs from a Republican-controlled Senate to confirm his polarizing picks, that leaves only the prospect of recess appointments, which would require the chamber to go on a break long enough for Trump to install them in the meantime. **But as long as Trump treats staffing as an exercise in trolling, the Senate's prerogative over his Cabinet picks remains on sturdy ground.**

If you want to understand how Trump's novel nominees are being received, listen carefully to what outgoing Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is telling allies.

"Institutions worth preserving have to be defended. And this is the work which, by necessity, has occupied my focus during my time in Washington," McConnell said on Nov. 12, when asked at an American

Enterprise Institute event about the potential Trump 2.0 Cabinet. The longest-serving party leader in history minced no words: "Each of these nominees needs to come before the Senate and go through the process and be vetted."

To someone unversed in McConnell-ese, that answer might not mean much, but it's a doozy for anyone who knows how the Kentucky Republican has wielded his influence for almost two decades. It was a quiet flex, but also a spike at the Capitol, where McConnell sustains major swagger even without a leadership title.

Two days later, incoming Senate majority leader John Thune, too, suggested Trump's nominees were far from a slam dunk: "None of this is gonna be easy," he told Fox News.

When asked about the possible use of recess appointments, Thune seemed happy to let McConnell play the heavy. "It's an option," he said. The purposefully vague answer made clear that playing understudy to McConnell for the past six very instructive years, Thune learned plenty about his new role.



For more insights from Washington, sign up for TIME's politics newsletter at time.com/theDCbrief

TECHNOLOGY

Why maiden names matter in the age of AI and identity

BY SHELLEY ZALIS

IN THE DIGITAL AGE, A NAME IS MORE THAN JUST A label. It's tied to our professional history and social media presence. It's also how we are recognized by AI algorithms. Many traditions dictate that a woman change her surname upon marriage—but when she does so, she often loses data continuity across systems that rely heavily on name recognition. Platforms like job applications, academic records, and social media accounts often fail to connect the dots between the old and new names. For instance, a woman who has built a successful career under her maiden name might find that AI systems struggle to link her past achievements with her new surname. Years of hard work and success may suddenly become invisible in the eyes of a machine.

The Female Quotient partnered with the Knot and SmithGeiger on a revealing research report. It found that while 77% of married American women still take their partner's last name, only 64% of unmarried women plan to follow this tradition when they marry. This shift signals a growing awareness of the impact that names have on personal identity and professional recognition. It also gives us a glimpse into the aftereffects of how artificial intelligence systems handle the data of women who do decide to give up their maiden names.

There is a clear shift when it comes to keeping maiden names among younger generations. The FQ report found that 32% of unmarried Gen Z women are more concerned with preserving their personal brands than adhering to traditional practices, compared with just 3% of millennials. Interestingly, 29% of unmarried women who plan to take their partner's last name will not use it professionally, highlighting a growing trend of women separating their personal and professional identities.

The implications of these choices extend far beyond personal identity. Public figures like Simone Biles Owens, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Beyoncé Knowles-Carter have all kept maiden names (or a combination of it with their partner's surname), signaling independence and career longevity. This trend is mirrored by Selena Gomez, who recently stated, "I'm not changing my name no matter what. I am Selena Gomez. That's it." These decisions underscore the importance of name retention in maintaining independence and continuity in a world that in many

ways exists online and where technology plays an ever increasing role in how we are represented.

WE MUST CHALLENGE the societal norms that underpin these traditions. Titles like Mr. and Mrs. connected to one partner's surname can perpetuate the idea of female subordination. Public campaigns and education can help shift these outdated attitudes.

At the same time, AI developers must step up to create smarter systems that recognize and connect identity changes—whether they involve name changes or personal rebranding. Platforms like LinkedIn have already introduced tools allowing users to account for name changes, a critical step in improving data accuracy and job recommendations. Yet much more needs to be done so that AI systems don't punish women for their personal choices.

Names are not just labels—they are integral to our identity and professional legacy. The decision to keep or change a maiden name



In the digital age, a name is more than just a label

after marriage carries profound implications—for AI systems, professional visibility, and societal norms alike. Addressing these issues through advocacy, smarter AI, and cultural shifts will ensure that all individuals receive fair representation and recognition.

After all, names hold power, and that power should open doors, not close them. It's time to ensure that every person, regardless of their chosen name, can reach their full potential.

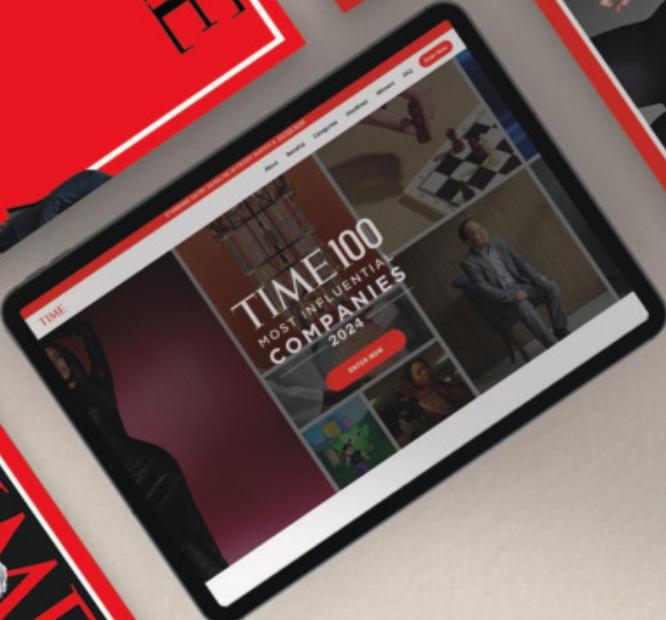
Zalis is a pioneer of online research and gender equity. She is the CEO of the Female Quotient

Ketchup and Strawberry
Peril and Promise of AI



BY MATT BAKER
Senior Correspondent

An open letter written and signed by some of the biggest names in computer science has raised the frightening specter of global annihilation at the hands (dare I?) of artificial intelligence. And while the 22-word statement is short on specifics, the signatures—among them ChatGPT developer Sam Altman—are knowledgeable enough to know what they are talking about. But AI,



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THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

Turkey's Erdogan plots his next power grab



RECEP TAYYIP

Erdogan is a political survivor. For more than 20 years, first as Turkey's Prime Minister and then as its President, he has weaved his way through the kinds of crises that end the careers of even the most resourceful and resilient of leaders: runaway inflation, a spiraling currency, the arrival of millions of refugees, corruption accusations, mass protests, international condemnation and pressure, and a 2016 coup attempt.

Erdogan has always been a shrewd populist who understands the importance of cultivating both the right friends and the right enemies. There are few stronger examples on the world stage of a leader who sees no permanent allies or rivals, only the never-changing need to win one more election. And by dismantling many of Turkey's independent state institutions—the military, the courts, and the media—he's amassed major power even at times his popularity was very much in question.

After stinging defeats in local elections in March for his ruling Justice and Development (AK) party, Erdogan took a step back to process his losses. It might be time, he concluded, to re-establish some long-strained ties. Though he spent years demonizing minority Kurds to form a useful alliance with the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Erdogan has worked to make peace with the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey's southeast. He is now floating "normalization"

talks with Ozgur Ozel, leader of the Republican People's Party (CHP), a center-left outfit. He's made nice with President-elect Donald Trump to boost economically valuable relations with the U.S. He's also using politically unpopular austerity measures to try to bring inflation under control. Once again, Turkey's long-time leader is proving unpredictable enough to frustrate an opposition hunting for weaknesses.



Erdogan, seen during a press conference in October, is angling to eliminate Turkey's presidential term limits

BUT ERDOGAN HAS a practical problem: Turkey's constitution allows Presidents just two terms. He has the luxury of time to find a solution, because Turkey's next presidential election is scheduled for May 2028. He has two options to try to hang on to power beyond that date. The first is to push parliament to call early elections, which would allow him to run once more before the expiration of his current term. The second would be to change the country's constitution.

Erdogan's preference is to rewrite the constitution. That's an

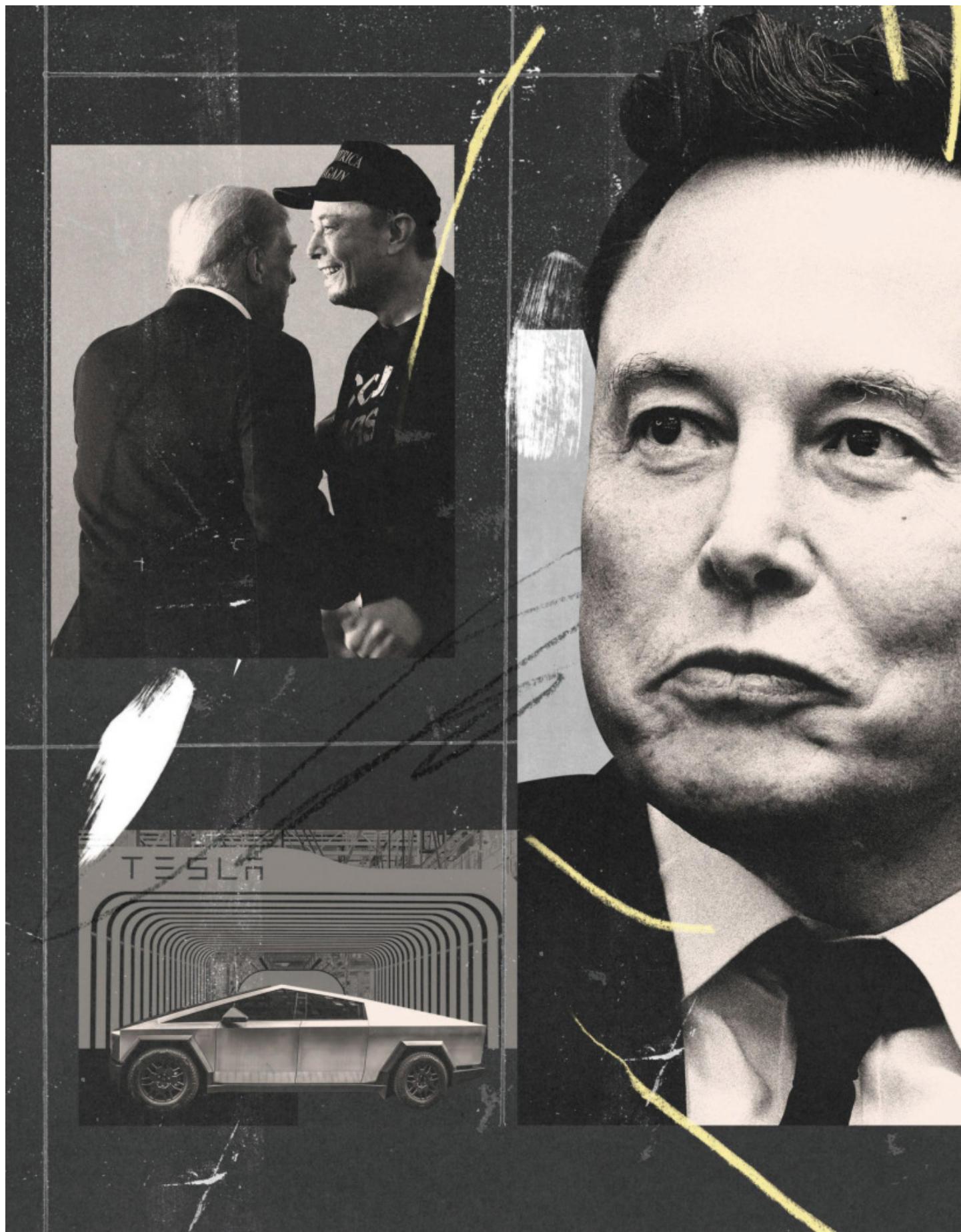
approach he already took in 2017 when he pushed a successful referendum that transformed Turkey from a parliamentary system into a presidential republic, cementing his grip on power. He'll sell the change to voters as a clean break from a troubled past, allowing him to continue to lead the Turkish Republic into its second century. Not content to erase the term limit, he also hopes to make it easier to win a third term by allowing a candidate to get elected without a majority of votes in the event of a second-round runoff.

But he faces an obstacle. His alliance with the MHP doesn't offer anywhere close to the number of parliamentary seats to even call a constitutional referendum, much less to make the desired changes without one. This is why, even as the CHP resists Erdogan's call for a new partnership, he's again turning to the Kurds who supported him early in his career with an offer to play peacemaker. Support from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Equality and

Democracy Party (DEM) might give him enough votes for the referendum.

There is no guarantee this plan can work. Cutting a deal with Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed leader of the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), won't by itself end a 40-year Kurdish insurgency—and any deal he makes with a broader group of Kurdish leaders will remain one terrorist attack away from blowing up Erdogan's plans.

Whatever strategy he chooses, there remains one constant in Turkey's politics: Never bet against the country's master political tactician. □



DAVID

The Kingmaker

Elon Musk's partnership
with the President-elect

By Simon Shuster



Hang on a minute. Whom did we just elect? The Republican ticket had two names at the top: Donald Trump and J.D. Vance. But parts of this delirious November created the impression that someone else has taken hold of our collective destiny.

We already knew him in various roles—the guy who bought Twitter and fired more than half its staff, the inventor who brought the space program back to life, the carmaker whose new trucks make kids stop and stare on the sidewalk. All of a sudden, Elon Musk had moved into the realm of politics, headlining rallies, steering government appointments, shaping the agenda for the next President of the United States.

For more than three years he's been one of the world's richest and most powerful men. Markets soar and tumble on his tweets. Astronauts fly in his spaceships. Armies advance with the signals from his satellites. Conspiracy theories go mainstream through his embrace. But it was only in the spotlight of these elections that the full extent of his influence came into view.

Not since the age of William Randolph Hearst, the newspaper magnate who greased FDR's ascent nearly a century ago, has a private citizen loomed so large over so many facets of American life at once, pulling the nation's culture, its media, its economy, and now its politics into the force field of his will. Standing beside him, even Trump can seem almost in awe, less a boss than a companion to the man for whom this planet and its challenges are not big enough.

For now they act like partners, bonded through the favors they are trading and their shared desire to disrupt the institutions of government. They may deliver commands with one

voice for a while. But their agendas do not align on everything. Both are willful, impulsive, and accustomed to being in charge. What will happen if they start to clash?

In that kind of fight, Musk may not have the upper hand. History is strewn with the wreckage of kingmakers who went to war against the leaders they installed. No matter how much wealth or influence Musk collects, the tools of state power will remain with the President, and things will get messy if he decides to use them against the billionaire who helped him return to the White House.

In the end, the durability of their partnership may depend on Musk's motives: What drove him to become a MAGA prophet in the first place? If it was money he wanted, then mission accomplished. The value of his fortune surged by more than \$50 billion in the week after the election, peaking at more than \$320 billion, as investors went berserk for shares of Tesla. But wealth has never been Musk's obsession. The way he has bet his fortune on moony passion projects, like putting a greenhouse on Mars, should be proof enough that he dreams differently than the average Klingon aboard Starship Trump.

People close to Musk say his ultimate goal has not changed since he launched SpaceX, his rocket company, in 2002. (Among its investors are Marc and Lynne Benioff, the owners of TIME.) For more than two decades, Musk's white whale has been the red planet. It's written right there on his favorite T-shirt: OCCUPY MARS. "Everything goes to that mission," says a member of Musk's social circle who recently talked to him about his plans. "He's just realizing that being in control, directly or indirectly, of U.S. government budgets, is going to put us on Mars in his lifetime. Doing it privately would be slower."

That does not mean U.S. taxpayers would foot the bill for Musk's dream of interplanetary travel. But the public does tend to pay a price when eccentric visionaries take the reins of government. Millions of Americans, from retired factory workers to debt-laden graduates and newborn children, benefit from the social programs that Musk has promised to slash. Though he fires off multiple tweets a day to his 205 million followers, Musk has declined to answer questions from reporters, including this one, since he became consigliere to the President-elect. He has not explained his reported contacts with American adversaries, from China and Russia to Iran. Nor has he addressed the conflicts of interest that arise from playing a key role in a government whose regulators investigate his businesses.

So far, Trump seems happy to play along. In the middle of his victory speech on Nov. 6, he spent



MUSK ATTENDS A GALA ON NOV. 14
AT MAR-A-LAGO, WHERE HE HAS
CAMPED OUT SINCE TRUMP'S WIN

four minutes praising Musk, the “super genius” who helped run his ground game in Pennsylvania, reportedly paying canvassers to knock on 11 million doors and hiring vans to bring Amish people to the polls. “We have a new star,” Trump crowed from the stage in Florida. “A star is born—Elon!” Only later, roughly 19 minutes into his speech, did the President-elect turn back to his teleprompter and remember to thank his voters.

WHAT MUSK MEANT to the Trump campaign went far beyond the \$120 million he pumped in, the field program he established, or the social media boost he provided. To many of the young men who flocked to Trump in record numbers, Musk was an ideal avatar. He injected a sense of ingenuity and possibility into a familiar nostalgia act. If Trump thrills supporters by pledging to destroy corrupt institutions, Musk represents the promise of building new things and solving hard problems. Trump did not seem so old at his rallies with this *Diablo*-playing edge-lord bouncing around beside him. And it became harder for Trump’s opponents to paint his team as a gaggle of halfwits when the greatest innovator

of our time, with a record of delivering on outlandish plans, was pledging to slash spending by \$2 trillion.

No matter how often the Democrats reminded us that Trump’s fortune grew out of inherited wealth, multiple bankruptcies, and decades of corporate shenanigans, they could not deny Musk’s achievements as a businessman. Even Senator Bernie Sanders, scourge of the billionaire class, hedged his criticism in a recent podcast: “Elon Musk is a very, very aggressive and capable businessperson, very impressive with what he’s accomplished. He says, I could do more in a week than the government can do in, you know, five years, and in some ways he’s right.”

At a time when faith in government has cratered, that’s all many voters want to see—a capable outsider, ruthless and independent, who knows how to take a gargantuan machine and make it leaner, faster, and more productive. Musk’s promise to do that with the American bureaucracy has already created momentum and cover for cutting costs on a scale that Washington has not seen in many years. That agenda did not get far during Trump’s first presidential term. Millions of people depend on government jobs, and on the protections that regulators provide from predatory businesses, like those that gave us opioid abuse and cigarettes as a cure for asthma. But small-government Republicans will be eager to follow Musk into ugly budget battles over federal waste and bloated entitlements. Many Americans will be rooting for them.

On the campaign trail, the most convincing argument Musk offered was not on Joe Rogan’s show or onstage at Trump’s rallies. It was on the launchpad in Boca Chica, Texas, where

Musk's aerospace company dazzled the world by catching a returning rocket with a pair of robotic arms. If the man who did this supports Trump with such fervor, couldn't Trump accomplish even some of what he promised?

A lot of voters seem to think so, especially the young men Musk targeted for Trump with his bravado. "The biggest factor here is that men need to vote," Musk told Rogan on the eve of the election. The next day, when 60% of white men turned out for Trump, Musk tweeted: "The cavalry has arrived." But his appeal reached well beyond the manosphere. It also moved a swath of voters who were put off by Trump's character but excited by his policies. TV pundits said these people needed a "permission structure"; Musk provided just that to suburban women like Betsy Stecz. As she stood in line for his October rally in Lancaster, Pa., Stecz described a sense of relief: "You have people finally feeling like, OK, I can hold my head up and say: I'm not ashamed to vote for Donald Trump." The reason, in her view, was Musk.

'Being in control ... of U.S. government budgets is going to put us on Mars.'

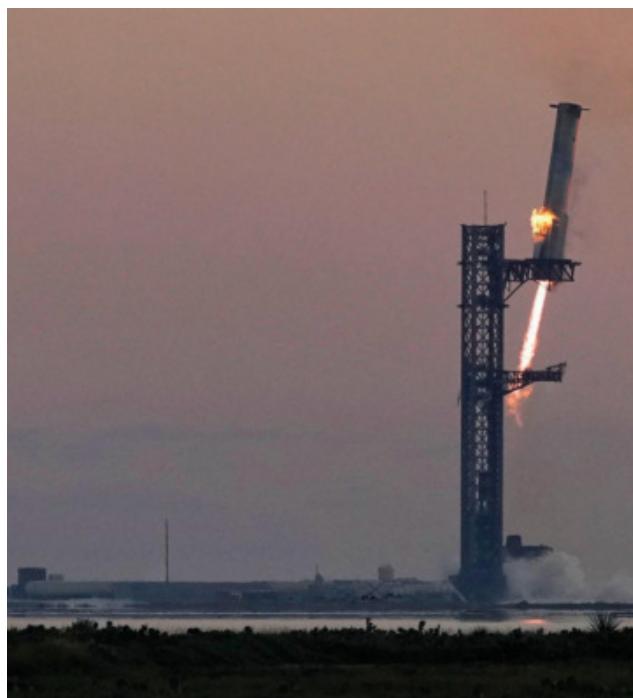
—A MUSK ALLY

GIVEN HIS ROLE in the victory, Musk may have expected some reward. But his perch in Trump's transition has reportedly unnerved some members of their entourage. For much of November, Musk camped out at Mar-a-Lago, weighing in on Cabinet picks and advising Trump on policy priorities. He went golfing with the President-elect, sat ringside with him at an Ultimate Fighting Championship event and took pictures with the Trump family; one grandkid raved on social media that Musk had attained "uncle status." Musk coined a different term for his position: "First Buddy."

Even that was an understatement. The leaders of Turkey and Ukraine had Musk listening in on their calls with Trump. An envoy from Iran, which stands accused of trying to assassinate Trump, reportedly met with Musk to talk about defusing tensions. (Iran's Foreign Ministry has denied the meeting.) When House Republicans invited Trump to a closed-door session on Capitol Hill, Musk tagged along, the window of his car in Trump's motorcade labeled GUEST 1.

By that point, Trump had appointed him to lead a new entity called the Department of Government Efficiency. Its acronym, DOGE, was a nod to the canine-themed cryptocurrency Musk has promoted as a kind of joke. But its mandate was serious. Trump claimed it would "dismantle" the federal bureaucracy and "restructure" its agencies. "This will send shock waves through the system," Musk said.

It could also give Musk influence over the many agencies that regulate his work. A few weeks before Election Day, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration announced it is investigating Tesla's self-driving vehicles after reported



crashes. In June, regulators in California ordered Tesla to "correct ongoing air quality violations" alleged at its Fremont plant. Tesla has said its cars are safe and its facilities comply with environmental standards. SpaceX has also had run-ins with the Federal Aviation Administration, which Musk threatened to sue for overreach in September. A review by the New York Times found that his companies are facing at least 20 regulatory battles and investigations from "all corners of the government." Musk and multiple representatives declined to comment or to respond to TIME's questions for this article, including about potential conflicts of interest.

He has yet to explain what principles would guide his purge of the bureaucracy. The co-director of DOGE, Vivek Ramaswamy, ran on a pro-business, libertarian platform in the last Republican primary. Musk's politics, by comparison, are harder to pin down. This summer he referred to himself as "historically, a moderate Democrat." He has called climate change the defining challenge of our age. When Barack Obama ran for President in 2008, Musk stood in line for six hours to shake his hand.

His relationship with Trump has often been rocky. Their views on tariffs are far apart, and Musk lasted less than six months as an adviser to the White House in 2017 before quitting in protest over Trump's climate policies. Five years later, Musk said it was time for Trump to "sail into the sunset," eliciting a furious response. "Elon should focus on getting himself out of the Twitter mess," Trump said, "because he could owe \$44 billion for something that's perhaps worthless."

TRUMP HAD A POINT. Musk's purchase of Twitter made little evident business sense. He paid at least double the company's value in 2022, then



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FLIGHT ON OCT. 13



MUSK ADDRESSES
THE CROWD AT AN
OCT. 27 TRUMP RALLY
IN NEW YORK CITY

spent weeks dynamiting its revenue streams and cashiering its talent. The company's head count, he has said, fell from 8,000 to around 1,500 under his leadership. Some of his posts on the platform, which he rebranded as X, came off as spasms of corporate self-harm. One referred to an antisemitic theory as the "actual truth." (He later apologized.) Another shared a conspiracy theory about the hammer attack that put House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband in the hospital with a fractured skull. Dozens of companies, including Microsoft and Coca-Cola, pulled their ads from the platform in response. "Don't advertise," he told them last fall from the stage of a conference. "If somebody is going to try to blackmail me with advertising, blackmail me with money, go f-ck yourself. Go. F-ck. Yourself. Is that clear?" The investment firm Fidelity assessed in October that X had lost nearly 80% of its value in the past two years.

Musk didn't seem to care. Even without most of its workforce, the platform continued to function, routinely topping the list of the most-downloaded news apps in the Apple app store. Major advertisers have returned. For some observers, all this has been reason enough to applaud Musk's takeover as a master class in corporate efficiency. "What Elon did with Twitter is he got inside, cleaned house, and now it's working better than before," says the member of Musk's social circle. "So the mood is that hopefully Musk can do the same thing with the U.S. government."

That's a tall order. Even fiscal hawks have balked

at Musk's promise to eliminate \$2 trillion in federal spending. It would require taking an ax to Medicare, Social Security, and other parts of the social safety net. Musk warned the nation to prepare for a period of "temporary hardship" as these cuts take effect. But it's far from clear that he will even have the power to make them. DOGE will remain outside of government, with no authority to fire federal employees. Many budgetary experts expect it to go the same way as countless blue-ribbon panels that tried and failed to pressure politicians to cut the programs their constituents love. In identifying waste, fraud, and abuse, the U.S. Congress needs no help: it already has an oversight branch called the Government Accountability Office, which assiduously tries to do that job.

Many early fans of DOGE say they recognize the limits of its potential and celebrate it all the same. "Yes, a Department of Government Efficiency is probably a pipe dream and might end up as essential as Monty Python's Department of Silly Walks," the *Wall Street Journal* columnist Andy Kessler wrote on Nov. 17. "But even if Mr. Musk's DOGE simply trims some bloat and saves a few hundred billion, it will be worth it."

On the campaign trail, Musk talked a lot about the need for the U.S. to live "honestly" and "within its means." But if his social media platform is any guide, his aims may have less to do with efficiency than ideology. His stated goal in acquiring Twitter matches one of his favorite reasons for supporting Trump: he says he wants to salvage free speech in America. "Freedom of speech is the bedrock of democracy," he told Joe Rogan on the eve of the election. "Once you lose freedom of speech, you lose democracy. Game over. That's why I bought Twitter." Multiple reports and studies concluded that under his stewardship, the platform has become a refuge for hateful and harmful content, in part because he fired its content-moderation team.

Asked to explain his shift to the right, Musk often brings up the "woke mind virus," his term for the leftward shift in American society that, in his view, gave rise to identity politics, cancel culture, and supposedly rampant online

censorship. His grudge against these forces is not merely political. During the pandemic, one of his children sought gender-affirming medical care, and Musk has said he was tricked into approving it. His transgender daughter, who is now 20 years old and estranged from her father, legally changed her name in 2022 to Vivian Jenna Wilson. On a podcast in July, Musk said his child “is dead, killed by the woke mind virus. I vowed to destroy the woke mind virus after that.”

Wilson posted her response the next day: “I look pretty good for a dead bitch.” On Nov. 5, as the results of the election became clear, Wilson published another message: “Blame the f-cking politicians and oligarchs who caused this to happen,” she wrote. “Direct your anger towards them.”

IN ANCIENT GREEK, the word *oligarkhia* meant “rule by the few.” Its earliest critic was Aristotle; in the 4th century B.C.E., the philosopher described it as a state of affairs in which “men of property have the government in their hands.” In medieval Venice, the leader of the oligarchy ruled for life, and he went by the same title that Musk gave to his new department: the Doge.

The purest expression of this system in modern times took shape in Russia in the 1990s, when a few businessmen bought up control of the national economy during its chaotic transition to capitalism. The Russian term for their oligarchy is *semibankirshchina*—the reign of the seven bankers.

The most powerful among them, Boris Berezovsky, used his media assets to help Vladimir Putin win his first election in 2000, and he expected the new President to share the spoils of power. Instead, the two of them began to feud. Soon the Russian state forced Berezovsky into exile and seized his television network. Broke and lonely, the oligarch died in 2013 at his mansion in the English countryside. Authorities ruled it a suicide. To this day, his former media channel carries the Kremlin’s message.

One of Berezovsky’s close associates, Alex Goldfarb, now lives in New Jersey, and he has followed the tandem of Musk and Trump with a mix of familiarity and dread. “There seems to be an oligarchy forming here as well,” he says. “Under Putin in the early years, we had the oligarchs fighting the state with everything they had,” says Goldfarb. “Here it seems we have two oligarchs, Musk and

Trump, working together to take over the state.”

The outcome may depend on the way this new duopoly treats the institutions they will soon control. If the aim is to sharpen them into leaner and more effective tools of governance, the public could benefit from the remaking of a system that has long been weighed down with bureaucratic flab. But Trump has also used those tools the way Putin has done in Russia—to benefit his friends and sideline his enemies.

Musk has a lot to gain from that arrangement. As long as he sticks to the role of First Buddy, he might



▲
THE PRESIDENT-ELECT,
MUSK, AND DONALD TRUMP JR.
AT A UFC FIGHT ON NOV. 16

expect an easy ride from the regulators Trump appoints throughout the government. His clearest path to Mars could thus run straight through the Oval Office. But apart from watching the spectacle of his success, what benefit will trickle down to everyday Americans?

The institutions that give us health care, keep our water clean, and educate our kids are not meant to be run like businesses. They are not built to make a profit, but that does not make them any less valuable, especially for the citizens who can least afford to pay. If those institutions get culled amid the Muskan push for efficiency, the hardship will not be temporary for those who rely on government support. For them, the pain could be devastating, and none of Musk’s promises of an interplanetary future will help them get through the problems of today. —With reporting by ERIC CORTELLESSA/LANCASTER and LESLIE DICKSTEIN/NEW YORK

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Amber Venz Box
at LTKCon in
Dallas on Sept. 16

B U S I N E S S

Shopping under the influence

LTK CO-FOUNDER **AMBER VENZ BOX** SAW THE FUTURE OF RETAIL. IT TOOK YEARS FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD TO CATCH UP **BY ELIANA DOCKTERMAN**

TWO WOMEN CLAD IN SHEER PEARL-DOTTED bodysuits with giant white roses strapped to their heads greet guests entering a Fashion Week party at Hotel Fouquet's in New York City. A sign outside the room notes that the capacity is 74 people, but more than 200 guests have RSVP'd. The noise is deafening, though that matters little: the point of this party is to photograph and be photographed.

One woman wears a leopard-print minidress with a matching coat, another a blazer with no shirt underneath. Several women fix their makeup in the mirrored cocktail tables scattered around the room. Even the DJ pauses to take a selfie.

Many of the attendees have hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of followers on social media, but the star of the night is Amber Venz Box, the host of the event and president and co-founder of LTK, one of the most popular influencer platforms in the world. Box, 36, usually keeps a relatively low profile: She lives on a ranch in Texas with her co-founder, CEO, and husband Baxter Box and their four kids in a location she won't disclose for privacy reasons. But in this room, influencers clamor for a picture with the willowy redhead. Several call her their hero. One of the richest self-made women in the U.S., with *Forbes* estimating her net worth at \$315 million in 2021, she helped pioneer the modern influencer economy by building a bridge between content creators and advertising dollars.

"We've come such a long way," she says in a welcome speech. "Looking at the guest list for today, 10% of you in the room are LTK millionaires." Everyone swivels their heads in search of these mystery super earners. A man next to me, clad entirely

in black, whispers, "Damn, let me take off my sunglasses and take a look around."

LTK has revolutionized the online shopping experience with what Box describes as a win-win-win model. The company allows influencers to post links to products they're wearing, carrying, and decorating with on the LTK platform, which their followers can access via social media or the LTK app. If, for instance, an LTK creator posts a photo in a cute blazer on Instagram, one of her followers can click over to the creator's LTK page to see where it came from and click from there to the brand site to buy it. The retailer makes the sale and pays a commission to the influencer and a transaction fee to LTK. The platform also offers creators information about their reach, their follower demographics, and what types of photos and videos are attracting attention. The company even connects influencers with brands looking for a specific type of person to promote a product—say, a furniture company seeking someone who appeals to 20-something women decorating their first apartments. LTK takes a cut of those deals too.

Box boasts that more than 8,000 retailers are on LTK, 40 million people shop through LTK creators every month, and LTK has helped 419 influencers become millionaires. She estimates that the company, which raised \$300 million from SoftBank at a \$2 billion valuation in 2021, will generate about \$5 billion in sales for brands this year, much of which will come this holiday season. Last November, according to LTK, more than \$200 worth of products were purchased every second through its creators.

Influencers are giving traditional advertising a run for its money: Goldman Sachs predicts the

creator economy will approach half a trillion dollars by 2027. But Box saw the potential more than a decade ago. During her speech at the soirée, she thanks everyone for flying in from all over the country. She lists some of the brands at Fashion Week that are on LTK—Proenza Schouler, Ulla Johnson, Simkhai—and emphasizes just how much the market has changed.

"Cheers to this community, and I hope that you guys have a wonderful, amazing Fashion Week," she says, "because Lord knows, these brands need you."

HOURS BEFORE THE PARTY, Box sits in her hotel room, fretting over what to wear. The choice is important not only because of who will see her outfit that night but also because LTK's 4.4 million Instagram followers will be able to look up her ensemble and purchase it through the LTK app. She ultimately decides on a \$2,065 blush-colored Costarellos gown, accessorized with a black handbag and pearl and diamond earrings.

Growing up in Texas, Box was an introverted kid who came to see fashion as a tool for attention. Her aunt, an artist, would paint her shoes for school. Box got kicked out of fifth-grade math class for knitting scarves she would sell to her friends. In high school she started making wire earrings, knockoffs of the gold ones she'd seen Jessica Simpson wear on *Newlyweds*. It wasn't long before fellow teens were dropping off their prom dresses at her home so she could make jewelry to match their look.

Box launched a jewelry line in high school and later sold it at the local store where she worked in college. "I thought that I was going to be the next Rachel Zoe," she says, referring to the celebrity stylist who had her own reality show. She spent a summer living in a frat house in L.A. while interning for photographers and stylists. The next summer she shared a mattress on the floor with a friend in an apartment in New York City and worked as an intern for the fashion brand Thakoon.

"Anna Wintour was always popping in," Box remembers. "It was sort of *Devil Wears Prada* in real life where they made us hide. Like, Anna couldn't see anyone but Thakoon [Panichgul]

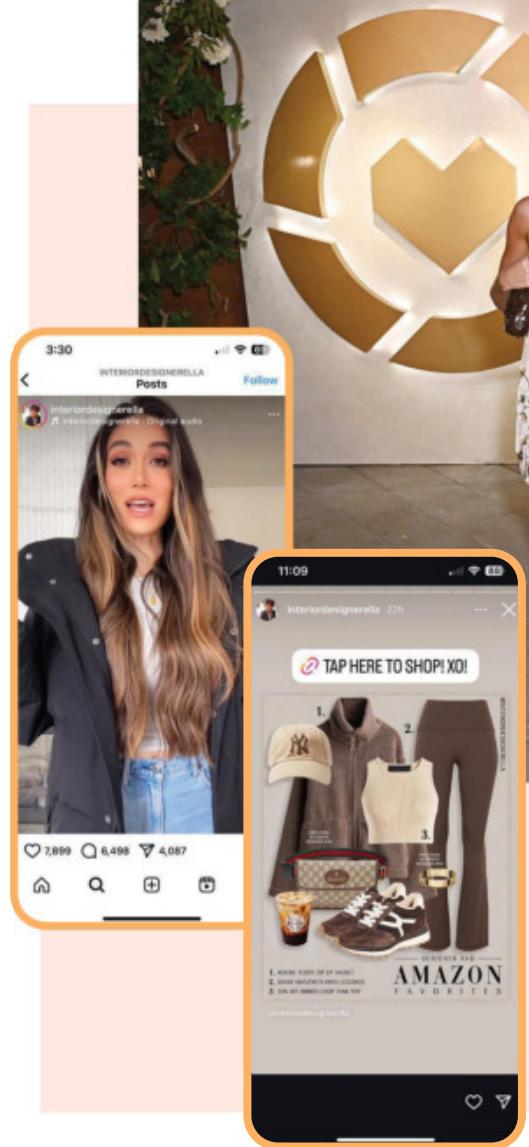
when she came in, and they would give us a warning. It was a really open space so you'd have to crouch down behind a wall." (Panichgul did not respond to requests for comment.)

When Box returned to Southern Methodist University for her senior year, she met her now husband Baxter, who had started a tech incubator. One day, he looked at her spreadsheets and realized her jewelry sales dwarfed what she was making as a sales clerk. "He was like, 'Oh my god. Where is this money?' And I was like, 'You're looking at it,'" gesturing to her clothes and shoes.

Baxter encouraged her to commit to the jewelry line full time, and she made a deal with his incubator to support the business. Still living in her father's house, she shipped her wares to department stores in New York and set up stands at local markets. "My stuff was, like, really avant-garde. And at this market, I was next to glitter makeup bags," she says. "I was sort of being snooty and a little offended about my positioning there. But then the first day, I sold \$8,000 of jewelry, and they sold \$400,000 of the sparkle bags." She went home to complain to her father. "He was like, 'Amber, sell to the masses.'" She didn't have time to implement the lesson. It was 2008, and when the economy took a turn, the business began to collapse.

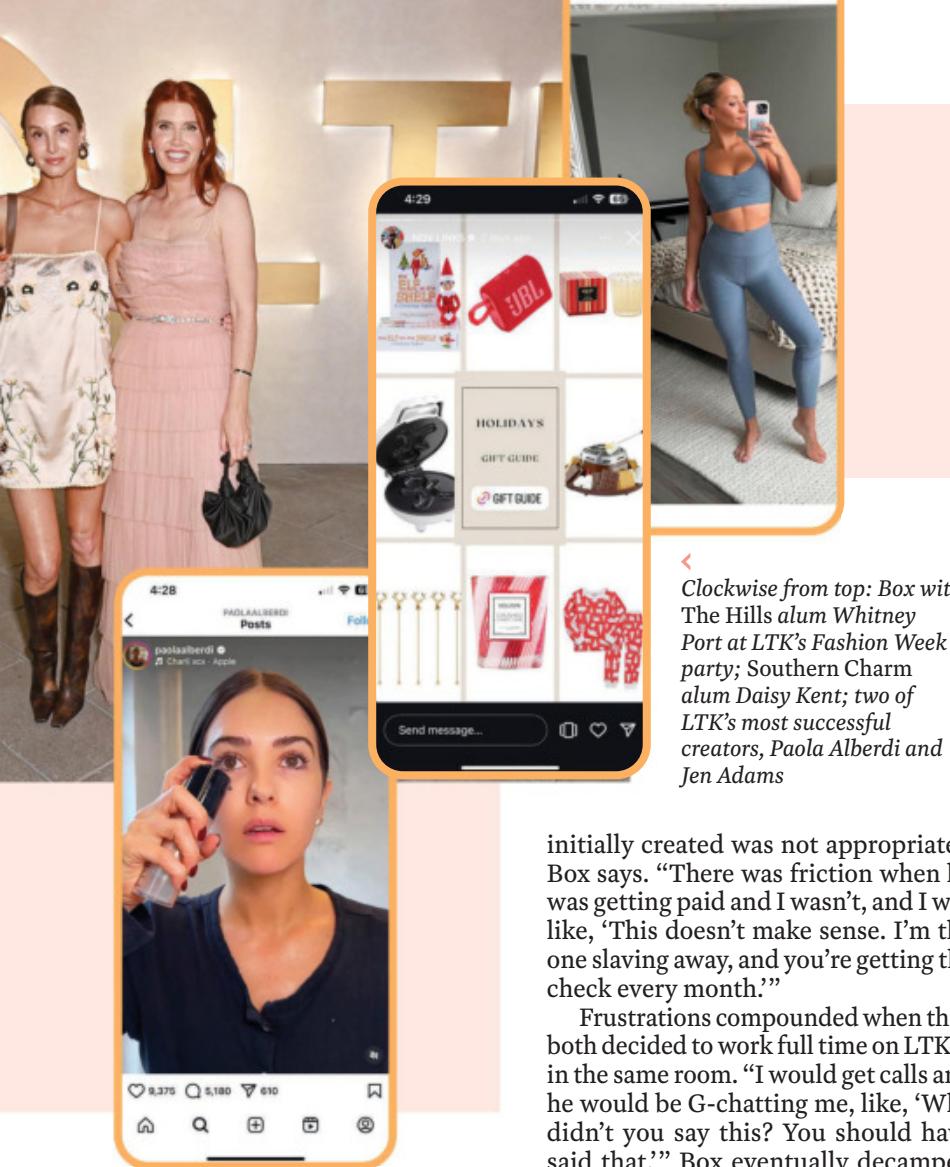
She worked as a personal stylist and made a decent living until she launched a fashion blog in 2010. The blog was featured in the *Dallas Morning News* and took off. But then her clients started enthusiastically buying the clothes she featured in her posts—without paying her for the advice. Dismayed, she went to a conference for fashion bloggers in New York on a mission to figure out how to monetize the blog. "I remember Leandra [Medine Cohen] from *Man Repeller* was onstage, and so I ran and grabbed her afterwards, and I was like, 'Hey so, how do you make money doing this?' She was like, 'Well, I don't.' So literally no one's making money." (Medine Cohen declined to comment, but a source close to her says the *Man Repeller* founder does not believe that she would have ever characterized her business this way.)

Box had spent thousands of dollars



on a laptop, a camera to photograph her outfits, a website domain, and a designer to build and maintain the site. "Fashion blogging was sort of like a rich-girl sport," she says. She dreamed of making a commission on the clothes she recommended on her blog, just as she had working with brick-and-mortar boutiques. And so the first iteration of LTK, called RewardStyle, was born. She had \$236 in her bank account the day it launched.

MY HOME IS a testament to the power of the influencer: I own a ridiculously efficient pepper grinder touted by several celebrity chefs, a Scandinavian rug hawked by a lifestyle blogger, and baby spoons recommended by a nutritionist turned momfluencer. That's before I even reach my closet. If you are active on social media, particularly Instagram or TikTok, you can also probably pinpoint the people online who inspired you to buy certain items.



Clockwise from top: Box with The Hills alum Whitney Port at LTK's Fashion Week party; Southern Charm alum Daisy Kent; two of LTK's most successful creators, Paola Alberdi and Jen Adams

initially created was not appropriate,” Box says. “There was friction when he was getting paid and I wasn’t, and I was like, ‘This doesn’t make sense. I’m the one slaving away, and you’re getting the check every month.’”

Frustrations compounded when they both decided to work full time on LTK—in the same room. “I would get calls and he would be G-chatting me, like, ‘Why didn’t you say this? You should have said that.’” Box eventually decamped to the bathroom to take her meetings. “Those were awful years,” she says. “We did break up several times. We never told anyone at the company, and we never behaved differently, because we didn’t want any of the company to think, ‘Oh no, what’s going to happen? The founders broke up.’”

The Boxes did, eventually, figure out how to work together: they operate out of separate buildings on their ranch and meet with each other in the car on the way to pick up their kids. And the rest of the world did, eventually, catch up to Box’s vision.

Companies slowly realized that potential customers were more likely to buy a product from an influencer whose taste they already trusted than from an ad put in front of them by an algorithm. A 2022 Pew Research Center study found that 30% of adult social media users had purchased something after seeing an influencer post about it, a number that jumped to 53% for those who follow creators’

But Box spent years trying to convince Silicon Valley that influencers were the future of commerce. In 2010, Box convinced Shopbop, which had been acquired by Amazon, that influencers might drive traffic to the online retailer. Medine Cohen and other fashion bloggers came onboard.

“We went to San Francisco, did this whole tour, and everyone was like, ‘I’m gonna call my girlfriend and see what she thinks about this.’ The idea of monetizing fashion blogs, it wasn’t really clicking for them,” Box says. “And then one of the places that we went into, the secretary dialed in and was like, ‘Baxter Box is here, and he brought his wife.’”

Looking back, Box says being overshadowed by a man wasn’t the only reason it was difficult to launch a company with her romantic partner. Even before they were co-founders, when his incubator had a deal with her jewelry company, she felt a sense of inequality. “I still think the structure that was

accounts. “Influencers offer a huge benefit to brands moving into spaces with customer bases who are unfamiliar with them,” says Jared Watson, a professor of marketing at NYU who specializes in the influencer economy. And then there are the parasocial or one-way relationships that followers form with influencers they love. “It feels like it’s a request from a friend or family member to check out this product, and they feel like they’re not going to be led astray,” Watson says.

In 2013, the Boxes launched LikeToKnow.It, a new platform with a focus on driving sales from social media. Consumers bought \$10 million worth of products promoted by its creators. In 2015, they bought \$50 million. In 2016, they bought \$150 million.

Paradoxically, the success made Box nervous. She felt too dependent on the fickle practices of social media sites. This fear had manifested when Pinterest, without warning, turned off outside links one day in 2012. (They turned LikeToKnow.It’s back on when Barneys complained that it had an ongoing ad campaign using its links.) So Box’s team began to build the LTK app, launched in April 2017, to cultivate a space that is less reliant on other social platforms. It saw a massive boom during the pandemic when creators suddenly had endless time to post everything from Target lamps to Chanel earrings—and shoppers endless time to stare at their phones.

The business grew so much that Box began to feel overstretched and, in 2023, decided she could no longer reside in a big city. “I am a pleaser,” she says. “There’s guilt with every no. It’s really nice to say, ‘Sorry, I can’t come to your birthday party or charity thing. I don’t live in Dallas anymore.’” She was also concerned about how her social media presence was impacting her family. “In Dallas, especially, we are a recognized family, and it is uncomfortable to go into restaurants and other places, because I know I’m just being watched all the time, and I know my kids are being watched in the same way, because they’ve been part of the story online,” she says. Which isn’t to say she’s stopped posting about them entirely. On a recent trip to New York

City to celebrate her daughter Birdie's 9th birthday, Box chronicled the family's outfits for their various excursions with links to LTK.

Watson of NYU says LTK has turned into the tool of choice for influencers. Individual social media sites like TikTok have ways to shop within the app but cannot offer creators data on engagement across other platforms. And competitors simply do not have as many brand relationships as LTK, which was early to the space. "They effectively make it a really nice one-stop shop for creators," he says. "And success begets success. One of the reasons LTK is crushing it is because all influencers hear about from one another is LTK."

IF YOU'RE INTRIGUED by the idea of becoming an LTK millionaire, know that it's not as simple as posting a few mirror selfies. The company now boasts more than 300,000 creators, but it remains selective. There's an application process in which Box's team analyzes influencers' engagement on social media, their aesthetic, and whether their content is shoppable. Once accepted, creators participate in a boot camp on how to light their pictures, write captions, and create an editorial calendar. "You also need credibility," Box says. "For example, now that I'm living on a ranch, my wardrobe has changed entirely. I have a huge boot collection because there are snakes where I live."

The company also recruits. It has targeted reality stars like Whitney Port from *The Hills*, who attended the Fashion Week party, and Daisy Kent from *The Bachelor*, who was one of 360 creators at the 12th annual LTKCon summit in Dallas three weeks later. "It kind of gives me meaning outside of the platform of the reality show or whatever I'm doing," says Olivia Flowers, a *Southern Charm* alum. "They teach me how I can promote my brand, which is me."

Box likes to hold up Emily of the Netflix show *Emily in Paris* as a model influencer. "Be Emily and then also make what you're doing in your life shoppable," Box tells her creators. I point out that many people—even fans of the show—find Emily insufferable exactly because of her influencer tendencies: her wild fashion choices, her

overly peppy demeanor, her insistence on taking photos of every aspect of her life. "She's not for everyone," Box says, laughing. But Box does think Emily could be successful on LTK. "I would tell her to keep being positive and happy. I tell our creators that. Also, respond to followers. If they message you and say they bought the jeans, they want your acknowledgment and validation. They should respond, 'I hope you liked them. What did you wear them with?' I call being a creator the hospitality business."

Jen Adams, an interior-design guru with 3.1 million Instagram followers, personifies this attitude. Walking out of the Fashion Week party, she is stopped every few steps by someone she has mentored. She hugs each new person and bounces with joy as she talks about the impact Box has had on her life. "The Nordstrom Anniversary Sale has always been a big event for creators. We call it Christmas in July," she says. One year, LTK reposted one of Adams' pictures the night before the sale. "When that day's commission came in, I literally fell out of bed," she says. One of LTK's most successful creators, she now employs 15 people, all of whom, she notes, are moms, and all of whom are supported by her LTK affiliate-link business, as is her own family.

How much money does she make on LTK exactly? She won't say. Several other influencers I speak to are similarly circumspect. If they are indeed millionaires, though, they are in the minority when it comes to the overall creator economy. Of the estimated 50 million people earning money by promoting content, only about 4% earn more than \$100,000 a year, according to a 2023 report from Goldman Sachs. And yet the number entering the space is likely to keep growing. A Morning Consult poll last year found that 57% of Gen Z and

41% of adults overall would become an influencer if they had the opportunity.

Asked how the company can maintain both its rate of growth and its air of exclusivity, Box says LTK is looking to broaden its reach overseas as well as expand its smaller verticals, like wellness and cooking, in the U.S. Kit Ulrich, LTK's general manager of the creator shopping platform, points to pickleball as an area of particular interest to sports brands looking to boost sales.

Though Box sold another company she co-founded, a platform that connected customers with nail technicians, to Glamsquad in 2023, she sidesteps questions of an LTK acquisition, saying only that she is always open to "strategic opportunities" but is focused on "future-proofing" the business. She knows, after all, that others want in. Instagram launched Instagram Shopping so users can buy from brands without leaving the app, and TikTok has TikTok Shop, though in November TikTok began letting its users link to LTK in their posts.

LTK introduced full-bleed, scrollable videos, à la TikTok, this year and has been incorporating AI learning to connect brands with creators. Meanwhile, the company has not forgotten what happened with Pinterest and continues to urge creators to grow their followings on its own app. Box says internal metrics show engagement on Instagram has been plummeting since the spring. "Individual creators have less power and control about whether their community is going to see them at any given time," Ulrich says. "Then you run the risk of not being able to earn as much money." Instagram did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Maybe someday Box will kick up her designer boots and retire to the luxury yurt vacation retreat that she and Baxter opened near Big Bend National Park in 2020. But if she learned anything from her early days trying to turn her passion into a livelihood, it's to recognize the challenges ahead but not be cowed by them. She recalls going to the store she worked at in Dallas and telling them about the new business she was launching. "The owner was like, 'No one's ever gonna pay somebody for online sales. So when it doesn't work, you can have your job back.'" She's good. □

*Fashion blogging
was sort of like a
rich-girl sport.*
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HEALTH

The Power of the Peer

WITH MENTAL-HEALTH CARE IN SHORT SUPPLY, CAN REGULAR PEOPLE FILL THE GAP? **BY JAMIE DUCHARME**

WOULD YOU SPEND \$40 ON A MEAL? A WORKOUT class? A new T-shirt? To chat with a stranger about their life experience for half an hour?

The last is the business model behind Fello, a new app that pays people to tell their life stories to others going through the same stuff. Just like Uber and Airbnb let people make cash from their cars and homes, Fello lets you monetize your hard-won wisdom.

The idea is to provide “a new type of support that you don’t get from going to a generic support group, perusing Reddit or Facebook groups, or meeting with a therapist,” says CEO Alyssa Pollack, a former executive at Uber Eats. The person on the other side of your screen isn’t a mental-health professional, but can speak to “the specific ‘lived experience’ that you’re going through.”

Though the app is new, the idea is not. Fello and other platforms like it are selling something that humans have long gotten for free: peer support. “It’s something that people naturally do,” says Kelly Davis, vice president of peer and youth advocacy at the nonprofit Mental Health America. “If you’re having a hard time, you often seek out someone else who went through something similar.”

Increasingly, that human tendency is being packaged and pitched as an answer to a deepening problem: traditional mental-health care is hard to find and hard to afford. Demand far outpaces supply, and providers often charge hundreds of dollars per session. The result is that more than half of U.S. adults with a mental illness did not receive treatment for their conditions as of 2022, according to Mental Health America. Overall, 42% of Americans say they’re concerned about their mental health, Harris Poll data finds, but only 10% of U.S. adults are seeing a therapist.

Peer support isn’t a complete fix. Lived experience can’t replace the years of training that mental-health professionals receive, especially for particularly sensitive situations or vulnerable groups. But some advocates, including policy-makers within the Biden Administration, argue it helps meet needs. Peers may offer a more attainable and softer-touch form of support for people who don’t want or require clinical treatment—or a complementary approach for people who are in treatment but feel something is missing. A peer offers something unique: the kind of camaraderie and practical advice borne from going through something hard and making it to the other side.

Keith Humphreys, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Stanford University, says this kind of care can be invaluable for patients and the system at large. Some people going through a tough time—a career setback, relationship hurdle, or life transition—just need a sympathetic ear. If they can get that from a peer rather than a specialist, they could free up mental-health services for people who truly need them, and perhaps get a type of guidance better suited to their situation.

These days, people who want peer support have lots of options. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has been using community to help people get and stay sober for nearly a century, and has inspired spin-off groups like Narcotics Anonymous and Workaholics Anonymous. Peer-counseling centers are becoming popular at schools and colleges. The National Alliance on Mental Illness runs a free peer-to-peer mentorship program for people with mental-health conditions. Federal and state health officials have even drafted rigorous training and competency requirements for people who wish to become professional peer supporters. In most



states, if individuals meet these standards—which usually involve at least 40 hours of training, sometimes augmented by additional supervision by mental-health professionals—they can bill their services to Medicaid.

Fello isn't the first app to wade into these waters. (It's not even the first founded by an ex-Uber employee—that would be Basis, which launched in 2018.) Platforms including HeyPeers, HearMe, TalkLife, and 7 Cups offer similar services. But virtual peer support isn't always executed well. Some companies have dealt with safety issues, like bad actors who abuse the model to give harmful advice or prey on vulnerable people.

Fello is betting that because loneliness is at epidemic levels and people are clamoring for novel forms of mental-health support, it's time for something new. "There's been a major shift, even in the last five years, for people's propensity to go get support," Pollack says. Why not get it from a stranger on your phone?

The app, which launched in August, already has thousands of users and hundreds of peer supporters, called "Fellos," Pollack says. People seeking help with substance use, parenting, or relationships are matched with people with no special qualifications other than having lived through

something similar. To become a Fello, all someone has to do is clear a background check, submit references who can vouch that they've experienced what they claim to, complete roughly five hours of training—significantly less than would be required of state-certified peer supporters—and pass an assessment. The app charges \$40 per 30-minute session, and the Fello pockets 70% of the fee.

Not all experts are buying it. Dr. John Torous, director of digital psychiatry at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, says he has reservations about paying to chat with strangers who may be seen as alternatives to therapists, but who don't have the training or licensure to back up that perception. "Who are these people, really?" he says. "That's the part that's concerning."

Apps like Fello operate in a gray area: their peer supporters aren't professionals, but they're not quite friends either. That makes Torous uneasy. "We don't want to make having a conversation costly," Torous says. "That would be a bad trend for society, if you have to pay to talk."

AT THE CORE of this debate is a straightforward question: can hearing about someone else's life improve your own?

The science on peer support is mixed. For

starters, it might not be great for the person dispensing the advice. Although some peer supporters report gaining resilience and insight into their own conditions, it can be emotionally taxing to relive challenging experiences over and over again. Many peer supporters do just fine psychologically, or even grow and find community, but the practice introduces the risk of burnout and emotional exhaustion, studies suggest.

Among people receiving peer support, there's minimal evidence to suggest the practice leads to "clinical recovery"—the sort of symptom reduction a traditional medical provider would measure. A 2019 research review concluded that there is "no high-quality evidence" to say whether the practice works for people with serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia.

But peer support does seem to boost the chances of "personal recovery," or the ability to build a satisfying and meaningful life even if symptoms persist, according to a 2023 study. Other studies suggest peer support fosters belonging, community, social connectedness, resilience, belief in oneself, hope, and empowerment—all of which can contribute to overall well-being, even if those attributes are harder to measure than clinical symptoms.

Keris Myrick, vice president of partnerships and innovation at the mental-health advocacy organization Inseparable and a peer-support expert, says it's a mistake to expect peer support to achieve the same things as traditional mental-health care—or to replace it—when that was never the goal.

A medical professional may be focused on treating someone's condition. But a peer supporter doesn't "really care what the person's diagnosis is," Myrick says. They're "walking alongside" someone, helping with whatever "the person identifies that they want to work on," whether that's a medical issue or not. Even though the goal isn't necessarily to lessen specific symptoms, that sometimes happens, Myrick says. Studies have shown that people who receive peer support are less likely to have repeat psychiatric hospitalizations.

Myrick, who has schizophrenia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, knows the power of a good peer. When she was first diagnosed, she felt something was missing from her "conventional" regimen of therapy and medication. "I remember meeting with my psychologist and saying, 'You wouldn't understand. You haven't been through it,'" she remembers. As a Black woman, she longed for someone who could relate to her.

Myrick stuck with her traditional care. But it was another woman of color living with mental illness who helped her solve problems like how to stay in graduate school and showed her that it was possible to live a rich, fulfilling life postdiagnosis. She "gave me the hope and the

evidence that recovery was real and possible," Myrick says. "I had to actually see it."

THERE'S REAL POWER in being around people who get what you're dealing with, says Humphreys, from Stanford. In 2020, he published a research review that found AA is not only effective at maintaining sobriety, but *more* effective than cognitive behavioral therapy. Humphreys thinks that's because participants can tap into shared understanding and see sober living in action.

In most cases, Humphreys says, there's no downside to trying peer support as a first resort. "If somebody says, 'I felt a little tightness in my chest when I was running,' I wouldn't say, 'You immediately need to go to a cardiac surgeon.' I would say, 'Go to your primary-care doctor,'" he says. "You go to the lowest-level thing" first.

There are limits, though. Peer counselors—particularly those who have not gone through extensive training—may not know what to do when faced with an emergency, like someone at imminent risk of self-harm. A 2023 report by Mental Health America found that only around half of student peer counselors felt their organizations offered enough training on handling crises. Davis, who wrote that report, adds that peer supporters, particularly students, may be out of their depth with less-common conditions like psychosis and schizophrenia.

Myrick adds that the model can go sideways when a peer supporter tries to act like a "mini clinician," rather than an equal. A key tenet of peer support is that "you're not diagnosing people" or "telling them to take or not take medicine," Davis agrees. If a relationship veers into that territory, it can have consequences for treatment.

Peer support can be transformative. But the danger is that it's easy to offer either "too much or too little," as one 2023 research review put it. A peer may either overstep the bounds of what their relationship is supposed to be, or may not have enough training to make a real difference.

That's a particular risk as peer support becomes the latest service to get the gig-economy treatment. Startups may or may not emulate the rigorous, research-backed training that certified peer supporters receive. Without that foundation, Myrick says, businesses are selling little more than the chance to talk to a stranger masquerading as a friend.

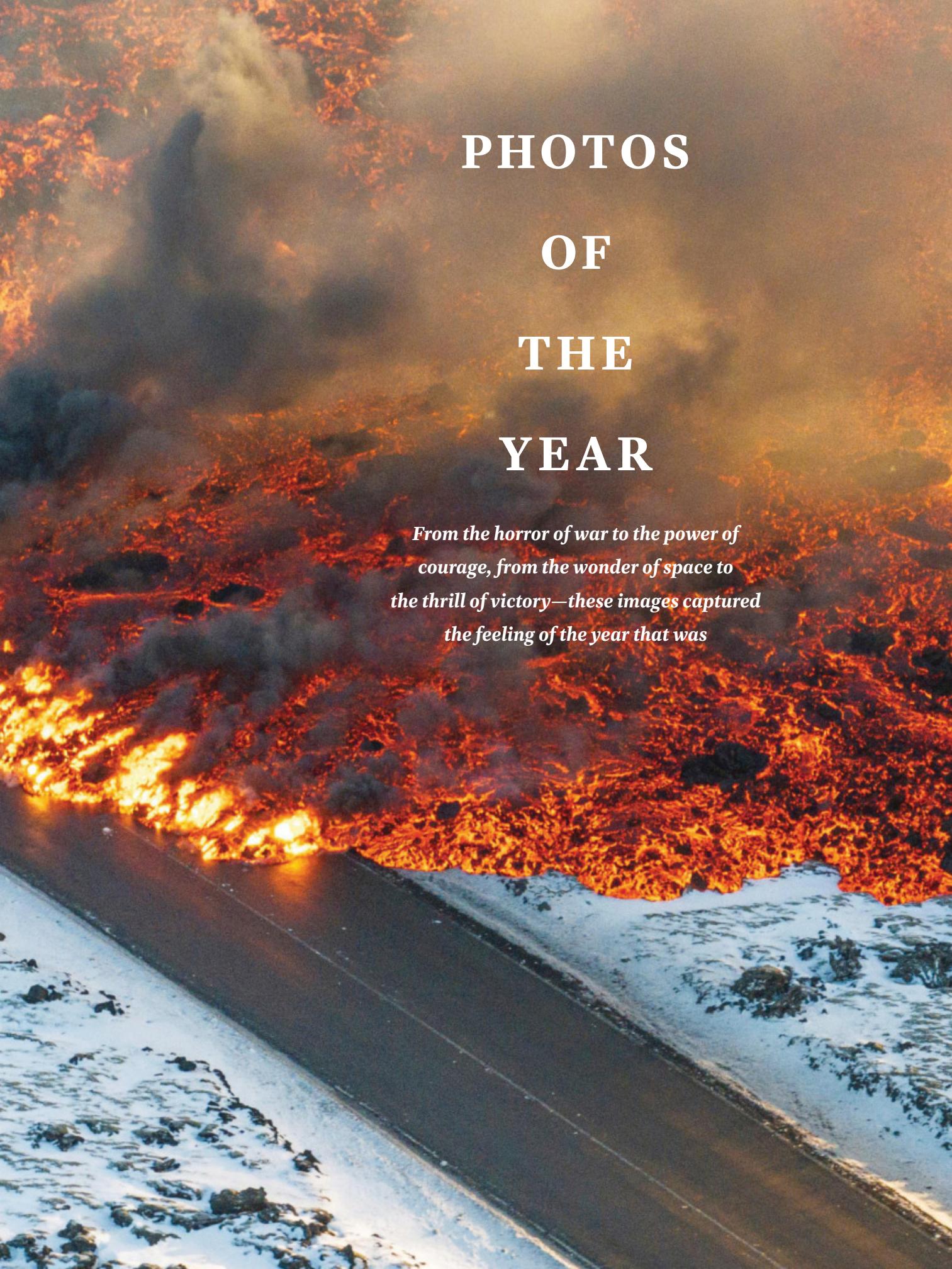
And, as Myrick says, "I want to have friends who will be my friend without having to give them 40 bucks." □

'I remember meeting with my psychologist and saying, "You wouldn't understand. You haven't been through it.'"'



Lava crosses the main road to Grindavik, Iceland, on Feb. 8. A volcano's eruption, for the third time since December 2023, sent jets of lava into the air and triggered an evacuation from the Blue Lagoon spa, one of the country's most popular tourist attractions. Until 2021, the region's volcanic systems had been dormant for 800 years

PHOTOGRAPH BY
MARCO DI MARCO—AP



PHOTOS OF THE YEAR

From the horror of war to the power of courage, from the wonder of space to the thrill of victory—these images captured the feeling of the year that was



Migrants from China warm themselves in Campo, Calif., after crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in a rainstorm on March 6. The number of Chinese asylum seekers arriving via the southern border has surged since the pandemic

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN MOORE—
GETTY IMAGES



Palestinians emerge from the rubble and dust after an Israeli attack hit the Abu Aisha family's house in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, on June 14

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALI JADALLAH—ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES



A search-and-rescue team prepares to enter a building following a magnitude-7.4 earthquake in Hualien, Taiwan, on April 3. The quake killed 17 and injured more than 900 others. It was the largest to hit the island in a quarter century, causing at least 28 buildings to collapse and triggering massive landslides in mountainous Hualien County

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAM YIK FEI—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



An activist cries during a debate among lawmakers on a controversial bill seeking to lift a 2015 ban on female genital mutilation, at the National Assembly in Banjul, Gambia, on March 18. The National Assembly voted to advance the bill, but in July, Gambia's parliament rejected the measure, maintaining the protections

PHOTOGRAPH BY CARMEN YASMINE ABD ALI





Israeli munitions hit southern Lebanon on Sept. 30, as Israeli ground troops crossed the border to attack positions of the Hezbollah militia. Almost a year after the Hamas attack of Oct. 7 ignited a devastating war in the Gaza Strip—during which Israel and Hezbollah have also traded fire nearly daily—Israel turned its focus to the Iranian proxy force, sparking fears of a widening war

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEO CORREA—AP

Brazil's Gabriel Medina appears to levitate during the men's surfing competition in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, held in Teahupo'o, on the French Polynesian island of Tahiti, on July 29. He earned the highest single-wave score in Olympic history and went on to win the bronze medal

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEROME BROUILLET—AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Kindergartners at Myers Elementary School in Grand Blanc, Mich., use paper-plate glasses to safely watch the solar eclipse on April 8. The total solar eclipse, which began its path across the U.S. in Texas and exited 2,000 miles later in Maine, was the last that will be visible in the contiguous United States until 2044

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAKE MAY





People take pictures as a 2-month-old female pygmy hippo named Moo Deng eats with her mother Jona at Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Chonburi province, Thailand, on Sept. 16. Born on July 10 and revealed to the public later that month, the baby hippo (and her iconic facial expressions) quickly became a viral internet sensation

PHOTOGRAPH BY ATHIT PERAWONGMETHA—REUTERS



Journalist Evan Gershkovich approaches colleagues covering his arrival at Joint Base Andrews, Md., on Aug. 1. After being wrongfully detained by Russia's Federal Security Service in March 2023, he was released in a prisoner exchange that involved seven nations and two dozen detainees

PHOTOGRAPH BY AL DRAGO—BLOOMBERG/GTETTY IMAGES





Medical workers treat a victim after a Russian missile attack heavily damaged residential buildings in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Jan. 23

PHOTOGRAPH
BY SOFIIA
GATILOVA—
REUTERS

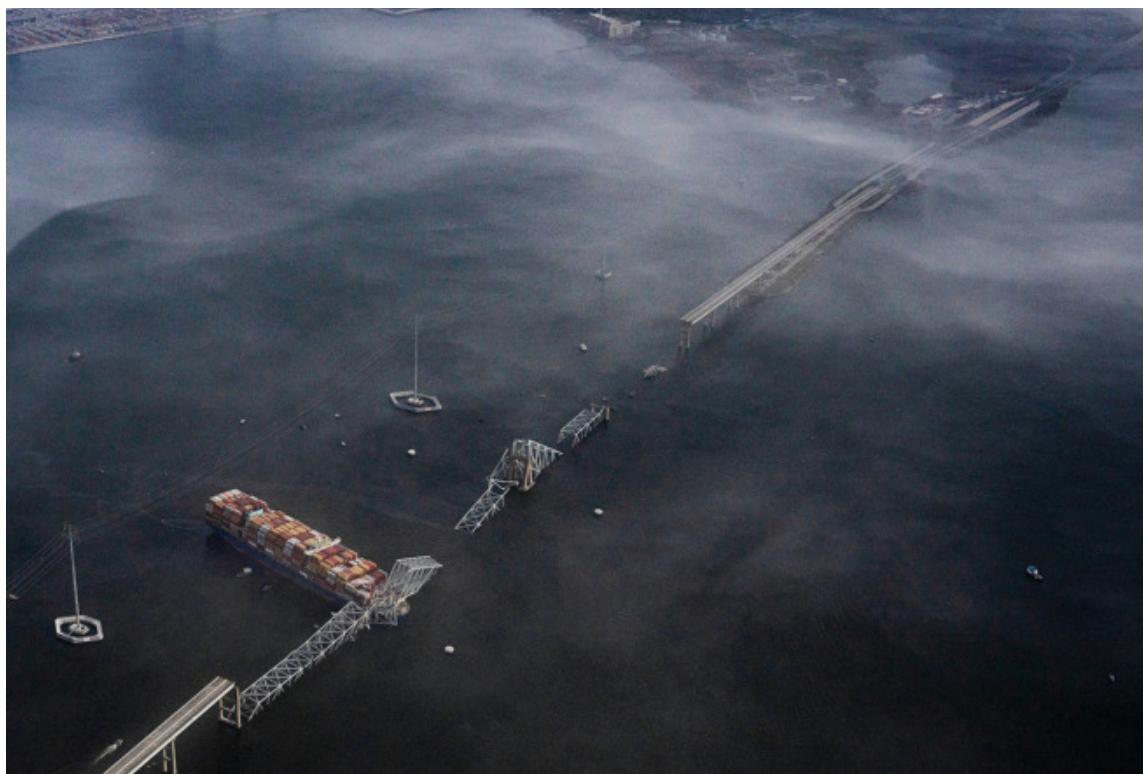
New York Yankees fans grab the glove of Los Angeles Dodgers right fielder Mookie Betts, who had caught a fly ball in foul territory during Game 4 of the World Series in the Bronx on Oct. 29. The fans were ejected. The Dodgers won the series in five games

PHOTOGRAPH BY AL BELLO—GETTY IMAGES



The aftermath of a container ship's collision with the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore on March 26. The Singapore-flagged vessel crashed into a column supporting the bridge, causing part of the span to collapse and killing six construction workers who were on it. State officials estimated repair costs at up to \$1.9 billion

PHOTOGRAPH BY CAROLYN VAN HOUTEN—THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES





An Israeli family gathers during their son's bar mitzvah in an underground bomb shelter near Nahariya in northern Israel on July 4, after Hezbollah fired more than 200 rockets into Israel in response to the killing of a senior Hezbollah commander in Lebanon

PHOTOGRAPH BY AMIT ELKAYAM



Armand "Mondo" Duplantis of Sweden vaults to a new world record of 6.25 m at the Olympics on Aug. 5. This was the eighth time since 2020 that Duplantis, who took home gold, broke the pole-vaulting world record. "Go out and do something special, do something that's never been done before," he told TIME. "That's the goal."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEKSANDRA SZMIGIEL—REUTERS



Floodwaters and a destroyed building block a road in Swannanoa, N.C., in the wake of Hurricane Helene on Sept. 27. The storm brought as much as 30 in. of rain to areas already saturated by an earlier front

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE BELLEME—
THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



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—E. B., Stone Mountain, GA



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QUEERING
THE STORY

BY RICH JUZWIAK

Luca Guadagnino directs
Daniel Craig in an adaptation
of William S. Burroughs'
1985 novella *Queer*

INSIDE

BROADCASTING THE
MUNICH MASSACRE

ANGELINA JOLIE TAKES
ON MARIA CALLAS

CHARLES YU BRINGS CHINATOWN
TO PAGE AND SCREEN

THE IMAGE ONSCREEN APPEARS JUST AS IT DID in a 17-year-old Luca Guadagnino's mind: as an infatuated man gazes at his object of desire, a translucent, almost ghostly version of his hand reaches out to stroke the face of his unwitting beloved. The words that inspired this image—ectoplasmic fingers and a *phantom thumb*—were written by William S. Burroughs in his 1985 semi-autobiographical novella *Queer*, which Guadagnino, now 53, read as a “solitary young man” in Palermo, Italy. He began work on an adaptation at 21, years before he’d direct his first feature film in 1999. Making Burroughs’ description come to life was “simple,” something out of the “old days” of cinema, the director says. “It’s superimposed, but it’s very strong,” he adds.

With *Queer*, opening Nov. 27, Guadagnino has achieved not quite the impossible but the unlikely: he’s rendered Burroughs’ freewheeling prose into a coherent film. Set in early-'50s Mexico City, *Queer* follows Burroughs’ literary alter ego William Lee (played by a multivalent Daniel Craig) as he pursues a younger man, Eugene Allerton (Drew Starkey), who seems impenetrable until he’s not. The courtship takes them into the wilds of South America and finds Lee blazed on alcohol, heroin, and psychedelics. The book is a sequel to 1953’s *Junkie* and went unpublished for decades. Craig’s performance is big, sometimes explosively so, and requires not only affected charm, but also deep sadness, the physical turmoil of opiate withdrawal, and some bumbling in the jungle. “We all were exhausted by the end,” said Craig. “We were all just hanging in rags by the time we finished.”

Justin Kuritzkes, the writer of Guadagnino’s other 2024 release, *Challengers*, adapted Burroughs’ novel into *Queer*’s screenplay. “I was trying to be a medium between these two brilliant queer artists: William Burroughs on the one hand and Luca on the other,” he says. That involved heaps of artistic license—Kuritzkes fleshed out the sex scenes, inserted surreal sequences that allude to the shooting death of Burroughs’ wife Joan Vollmer, for which he was convicted in absentia; and teased out the third act beyond what Burroughs merely suggested. Dr. Cotter, for example, “a small, wiry man in his middle fifties” living in the Ecuadorean jungle, becomes a woman, played with relish by a greasy-haired, dirt-speckled Lesley Manville.

At the same time, much of the film is doggedly faithful to Burroughs’ book, transplanting chunks of dialogue and tracing its overall arc. Guadagnino’s *Queer* is at once a tribute and an extension, a queering of the very act of adaptation. “You adhere to the book because it’s important to adhere to the source material,” explains Craig. “But as artists, it’s our job to interpret and to expand.”

QUEER DESCRIBES WAY MORE than the sexuality of its protagonist—it’s practically the film’s ethos. In many ways, this movie is queer as in askew, or deviating from a recognizable form. Almost all of it was shot at Cinecittà Studios in Rome, which lends an old Hollywood movie-set vibe to its gritty content that would never have gotten past the Production Code of the story’s own era. And then there’s



Guadagnino on
the set of *Queer*,
at Cinecittà
Studios in Rome

Craig’s depiction of Lee, which doesn’t call for a strict impersonation of Burroughs as he was in the ’50s (“Thank Christ!” says the actor), but was partly inspired by late-in-life candid footage of Burroughs “high and giggling and being mischievous.” *Queer* also queers the prototypical love story: Lee is smitten with Allerton, while Allerton stays mostly aloof, spurning Lee in public in favor of a young woman and sharing views on gay culture that sow doubt as to his own sexuality. Yet Guadagnino and his cast insist this is a story not of unrequited love but of unsynchronized love.

In a joint Zoom interview in November, both Guadagnino and Craig downplayed the importance of Lee’s queerness, which came as a surprise given the film’s title, for one thing. “For me, this is not about gay or homosexuality, it’s more about: Are we ready for connection? What is preventing these characters from having a full-blown connection?” says Guadagnino. “In a way, the sexuality of the protagonist, it’s down the list of important things,” adds Craig. “It is the emotional journey of these people. And that’s what we concentrated on while making the film.”



To be clear, the movie's sex is definitive and copious. Those who were frustrated by the camera's pronounced panning away in Guadagnino's previous May-December gay romance *Call Me by Your Name* should be sated by *Queer*'s frankness. Both of Craig's onscreen sex partners, Starkey and singer-songwriter Omar Apollo, who makes his film debut in *Queer*, appear fully nude—Starkey says he wore a prosthetic, though Apollo would not confirm or deny the veracity of his cinematic anatomy. ("They're young. They're young and beautiful," says Craig when asked why he didn't go full frontal as well.) Craig credits laughter between takes with easing the tension. Plus, Starkey says movement rehearsals for a kind of dance sequence toward the end of the film broke the ice. "We got to embarrass ourselves in front of one another—and have little accomplishments in the choreography with each other. That imbued its way into everything."

THERE WAS A TIME when a straight actor playing a gay character was considered a career risk. There was a time when it was considered controversial. Now, though it doesn't raise as many

eyebrows, it's still worth noting that Guadagnino tapped the actor most closely associated with the prototypical heterosexual male character of the last century, James Bond, to star in a movie called *Queer*.

"For a movie like this to come out right now with Daniel Craig, who's James Bond, and this masculine symbol—I think is so important," says Apollo.

"I'm fascinated by the artifice of masculinity," Craig says regarding the through line from 007 to Lee. "The way in is to think about the way men are perceived and how they can present themselves."

Craig, who has been married to actor Rachel Weisz since 2011 and has played queer characters in several other pictures before, including 1998's *Love Is the Devil: Study for a Portrait of Francis Bacon* and the *Knives Out* franchise, says the role was not just about Lee's sexuality, but his flaws. His goal was simply "to get it right." He adds, "The complexity of sexuality is way beyond my understanding—it's more individual than a thumbprint."

Still, queer stories remain far less common than heterosexual ones, and the queer community has a long tradition of decrying negative depictions given this scarcity (see, for example, William Friedkin's 1980 gay serial-killer thriller *Cruising*, as well as *Basic Instinct* and *The Silence of the Lambs*). Guadagnino doesn't seem to care if presenting a flawed gay character will ruffle feathers. "I don't want to be part of a club that would have me, like Groucho Marx said," he observes, adding that he's not interested in appealing to a community's expectations or demands. "I don't care about it. I think it's crazy. It's almost like a sort of in-breed concept."

Guadagnino is uncommonly lucid and staunch when he discusses his

artistic intentions—to the point of effectively interpreting his work for people. One recurring image in *Queer* is of a centipede. Those who haven't read the book might wonder why it's there, and even those who have might be confused—in the text, Burroughs makes only a fleeting reference to the bug. Well, Guadagnino has an answer, based in part on his reading of Burroughs' journals. "The centipede is repression," he says. "The centipede is the villain in the movie." The moment when, while staying in a hotel with two double beds, a dope-sick, shivering Lee asks Allerton if he can get in bed with him, and Allerton relents and places his foot over Lee's own? "There is the moment [when] you realize that this is a love story," Guadagnino proclaims.

AFTER ITS WORLD PREMIERE at the Venice Film Festival in September, *Queer* was received with a nearly nine-minute standing ovation. Months later, the reception in Istanbul was decidedly frostier—it was banned for "threat to public peace" because of its "provocative content." As a result, the streamer and distributor Mubi canceled its Mubi Fest Istanbul 2024, for which *Queer* was set as the opening film. Guadagnino was unfazed, suggesting that censoring things only makes people want to see them more. While screenwriter Kuritzkes believes that "you can't make a movie called *Queer*, set in the '50s in Mexico, release it in 2024, for it not to be political," Guadagnino sees its politics more as a threat to the cinematic status quo. "If it is political, it's political in the sense that it showcases that we don't need to do movies that come from a mold, but that we can forge prototypes," he says.

For Guadagnino, the queerest thing about his film is its capacity to be at once universal and precise. "It's a queer movie because it can afford to be absolutely specific and bombastic in its own ways, and at the same time, it encompasses and communicates feelings that we have all gone through in our lives," he says. Craig agrees. "Anything that gets too binary is not really interesting to me." □

'This is not about homosexuality. It's about: Are we ready for connection?'

LUCA GUADAGNINO, DIRECTOR

FEATURE

Broadcasting a crisis for the world to see

BY OLIVIA B. WAXMAN

ON SEPT. 5, 1972, A 32-YEAR-OLD PRODUCER NAMED Geoffrey S. Mason was working in a control room for ABC Sports in Munich while 12 hostages, including several members of the Israeli Olympic delegation, were being held in a building nearby. As Mason's team was in the midst of covering the breaking news—having pivoted from their regularly scheduled athletic programming—the doors suddenly burst open and Mason found himself staring through the cigarette haze at German police machine guns pointed straight at his face. The Germans were upset that one of the network's cameras was showing that German sharpshooters had taken positions on the roof above the hostages, threatening to thwart a rescue effort.

The camera was quickly turned off, but Mason's indelible memory of that confrontation lives on, not only in his mind but also in the new movie *September 5*, in limited theaters Dec. 13. Directed by Tim Fehlbaum, the drama recounts how journalists broadcast the act of terror live to millions. It's the second feature film released this century about the Munich massacre, following Steven Spielberg's Oscar-nominated 2005 historical epic *Munich*. And the 1999 film *One Day in September* won the Oscar for best documentary feature. But unlike those films, *September 5* is, like *Spotlight*, *The Post*, and *She Said* in recent years, a journalism movie at heart. And its arrival is timely, given the prominent role of hostages in Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza.

The movie is constructed around the ABC Sports team's about-face from athletics to terrorism, centering the perspective of the broadcasters who sneaked cameras into the Olympic Village to film the frenetic scene. Mason, one of the producers calling the shots that day, played in the movie by *Past Lives* actor John Magaro, consulted on the script co-written by Fehlbaum, Moritz Binder, and Alex David. As he recalls, "I remember thinking, good Lord: We're supposed to be watching Mark Spitz go for seven gold medals and Olga Korbut—the new face of Russian gymnastics—and I'm now watching people crawl across a roof getting ready to stage a military assault on terrorists."

THE 1972 HOSTAGE CRISIS took place five years after Israel had demonstrated its military superiority in the Six-Day War, and Palestinian militants relied on hijackings and terrorist attacks to draw attention to their cause. On that late-summer day in 1972, the Palestinian militant group known as the Black September Organization called for the release of 234 prisoners—some of whom had been imprisoned for years in Israeli and German jails, threatening to kill one hostage every hour until their demand was met.

The goal of the Munich attack "was to put the Palestinian situation on the largest possible world stage," says David Clay Large, author of *Munich 1972: Tragedy, Terror,*



John Magaro, at center looking up, plays producer Geoffrey Mason in *September 5*

and *Triumph at the Olympic Games*. "The Olympics would do just that." Meanwhile, in addition to inflicting a devastating loss of life, the hostage crisis would become a major source of embarrassment for Germany, less than three decades after the end of the Holocaust. As Large explains, "One of the most pressing concerns for the Munich organizers was not to look like the old Germany—of concentration camps and watch towers—or the Berlin Games of 1936, which had heavy security, armed guards. They wanted to look like the new, joyful Germany—transparent, democratic, open."

Mason was just one of several journalists who expected to be covering sports that day in Munich but were suddenly called upon to redirect their training toward reporting on an act of terrorism. One colleague, Marvin Bader (played by Ben Chaplin in the movie), was a Jewish American journalist for whom an assignment in the country where the Holocaust took place brought deep discomfort. According to Mason, "Marvin was a deeply religious and sensitive person, and so having spent a number of years



Members of the ABC team in Munich in 1972, above; Mason in 1972, right



in Germany doing shows like this—like ski jumping—to go back to Germany time and time again was not easy.”

As the movie depicts, Mason’s colleague from the news division, Peter Jennings, dressed up like an athlete with fake credentials and went undercover, sneaking into the Olympic Village so he could watch the scene unfold from the 11th floor of the Italian delegation, across the street from the Israeli team’s compound. During the course of the day, one hostage escaped through a window and two were killed as they tried to seize their captors’ weapons. The drama ended with the deaths of the remaining nine in a botched rescue attempt that night, at an airfield. ABC host Jim McKay told the world, “They’re all gone.”

AFTER HE STAYED UP for an entire day, Mason remembers going back to his hotel room after the crisis subsided, pouring a stiff drink, and having “a good cry.” “It was the first time that day we had been able to feel what we were involved in,” he says. He remembers thinking, “This is all so unfair. These young people were just trying

to represent their country and to pursue excellence in front of the world, and they were deprived of that opportunity.”

In the immediate aftermath of the massacre, Israel responded by launching air attacks and bombings against Palestine Liberation Organization targets in Lebanon and Syria. According to Large, “There was initially all kinds of sympathy for the Israelis in connection with this terrible attack, but the reprisal attacks by the Israelis were so severe and so nondiscriminating that opinion started to turn against the Israelis to some degree.” He adds, “There are a lot of parallels between then and now.” A year after the terrorist attack, in 1973, the Yom Kippur War took place, with a coalition of Arab states, led by Egypt and Syria, attacking the Sinai Peninsula in retaliation for the Israeli airstrikes.

After the historic 1972 broadcast, Mason continued to work as a producer in sports broadcasting, accumulating a total of nine Olympic Games and half a dozen FIFA World Cups under his belt. Now based in Florida, he’s the executive producer and CEO of his own production company. Consulting on *September 5* has been surreal, he says: to experience being in front of the camera—at least, as portrayed by Magaro—instead of behind it. As he puts it, “I’ve been behind the scenes all these years in production, so I had to get used to working with someone who is actually playing me. That took some getting used to.”

More than anything, he hopes the dedication that he and his colleagues brought to journalism will be the main take-home message for viewers. “It was a roller-coaster ride the entire day,” Mason reflects. “We were just doing our job, and we had to get [the story] right.” □

We were just doing our job, and we had to get [the story] right.’

GEOFFREY MASON,
PRODUCER



MOVIES

An exuberant ode to human possibility

BY STEPHANIE ZACHAREK

VERY RARELY DOES THE RIGHT MOVIE ARRIVE AT precisely the right time, at a moment when compassion is in short supply and the collective human imagination has come to feel shrunken and desiccated. Jacques Audiard's operatic musical *Emilia Pérez* is the story of a disillusioned lawyer working in Mexico, Zoe Saldaña's Rita, who gets a mysterious phone call and is whisked, blindfolded, to a secret location. There, the gruff leader of a drug cartel, Juan "Manitas" Del Monte, outlines a delicate but lucrative mission. Manitas wants to transition to living as a woman and wants Rita to arrange the surgery and subsequent disappearance. Rita pulls it off: In a few years, Manitas re-emerges as the person she always knew she needed to be. She is now Emilia Pérez (Karla Sofía Gascón plays both roles), free to live as she chooses. Rita thinks her mission is over, though it's just beginning.

In fiction, as in real life, it's easy to view a dream fulfilled as a happy ending. But after Emilia gets what she wants, she asks, Now what? *Emilia Pérez* is a story not about personal fulfillment but about personal responsibility, and what happens after you become the person you were destined to be.

If you set a Douglas Sirk movie in modern Mexico, and added singing and dancing, you might come up with something like *Emilia Pérez*. Audiard drew the

▲
Saldaña as Rita
and Gascón
as Emilia, two
women seeking
fulfillment in
their own ways

screenplay from an opera libretto he'd adapted from Boris Razon's novel *Écoute*. The plot turns may feel zany, but they come to make perfect emotional sense. When Rita first meets Emilia, four years after she and Manitas have parted ways, she doesn't recognize her. The menacing thug—who was, even so, devoted to his two kids and their mother, Jessi (Selena Gomez)—is now an elegant vixen. Rita had already helped Manitas' family settle in Switzerland; they believe him to be dead. But now Emilia needs Rita again. Emilia wants to make amends for the suffering she caused in her old life; she also longs to reconnect with her family. And she yearns for companionship too. She meets a woman whose scrappy spirit matches her own, Epifanía (a radiant Adriana Paz), though that relationship also comes with its own complications.

AUDIARD ORCHESTRATES this craziness with the assurance of an ace conductor. The musical numbers are exuberant without being overly polished. This isn't a movie about showing off how much money a studio spent but about how willing an artist is to go for broke. And it's fantastic to see Saldaña sing and dance in a vehicle worthy of her. Rita is complex: she has principles, but she's motivated by money. Saldaña makes those dimensions feel believable and real.

It's kismet that she found her way into a Jacques Audiard movie. There's no easy way to categorize his career, but many of his films, from melodrama *Rust and Bone* to gritty romance *The Beat That My Heart Skipped* and certainly *Emilia Pérez*, are about people who dream of becoming something else. In Gascón, he's discovered a great star to bring his ideas to life. The Spanish actor,

Emilia Pérez is a radical act of the imagination with kindness in its heart

now 52, transitioned at 46, and spent the bulk of her career in Mexican telenovelas. In *Emilia Pérez*, she's incandescent. Her performance is bold, assertive, but also blazingly tender. She has a knack for putting us in touch with big emotions, no matter how much we want to push them away.

As it turns out, roughly half the country is now working through some big emotions they'd rather not feel. In the 1990s, in the more liberal corners of the U.S., you couldn't pass three Honda Accords without seeing a "Practice Random Acts of Kindness" bumper sticker. Even those who cherished liberal ideals would roll their eyes. Like many bromides, it could mean different things: a white-supremacist granny who bakes for a bereaved neighbor might think she's in compliance.

But boy, has the world changed since *Emilia Pérez* premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in May. After I saw it there, while most people I knew derived at least some pleasure from it, I spoke to two who despised it, claiming it didn't represent the experiences of trans individuals. Though it's impossible for a movie to reflect a nonmonolithic group, lived experience certainly counts for something when we talk about art. No one has to like anything. But the very existence of *Emilia Pérez* means something different now than it did in May. Now that trans rights are even more imperiled, a movie that instead of pleading for acceptance treats it as a given, feels more fierce and glorious, a radical act of the imagination with kindness in its heart. Audiard's film is a challenge to find the beginning after the end. It's not about trans possibility, but human possibility. Because they're one and the same. □

MOVIES

Maria strives, and fails, to capture the spirit of a diva

YOU DON'T HAVE TO LOVE OPERA TO love Maria Callas. Her voice reflected all the colors of paradise, before Adam and Eve were kicked out. Her beauty was halfway between mythical and mischievous, as if she'd been drawn by the gods' caricaturist-in-chief. No wonder Pablo Larraín wanted to add her to his gallery of troubled ladies, which includes Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (2016's *Jackie*) and Princess Diana (2021's *Spencer*).

In *Maria*, Angelina Jolie plays La Diva Callas in her final days, in 1977 Paris. Like a gothic ghost, she glides through her gilt-and-brocade apartment in fairy-tale dressing gowns, eating nothing but popping sedatives. Jolie's Maria mourns the presence she used to be. Every gesture Jolie makes is tragic and quivering, rendering the great artist's final days with a self-conscious sheen that has nothing to do with the inherent grandness, or sadness, of Callas' life. It's not Jolie's fault: *Maria* is made with great respect, almost adulation, but very little

that qualifies as real feeling. That's not to say Larraín doesn't feel for his subjects; it's just that he can't translate those feelings into anything but tasteful, mannered kitsch. His allegedly sympathetic psychopartrraits are the movie equivalent of Madame Alexander dolls lined up on a dresser: extremely pretty, but not made for touching. Yes, these are intentionally stylized exercises, but their fussiness is exhausting. There's much to admire in *Maria*, if admiration is what floats your boat. Jolie trained, with great dedication, so she could do her own singing. The film is gorgeous; Callas had killer clothes and wore them beautifully—*Maria* gets that right.

Larraín does his movie no favors by using footage of the real Callas in the closing credits: to see her laughing as she sang, with her whole being, is to get a jolt of all the vitality *Maria* has failed to capture. Callas, only 53 when she died, was bigger than life. *Maria* may burnish her legend. But it also snuffs out her spark. —S.Z.



Jolie looks the part of Callas, but the soprano's spark is absent

TELEVISION

A timely thriller for a mad, mad world

BY JUDY BERMAN

MUNCIE DANIELS IS JUST TRYING TO MAKE HIS voice heard over the cacophony that passes for public discourse. An ambitious CNN commentator, the protagonist of the conspiracy thriller series *The Madness* (now streaming on Netflix) has been neglecting his personal life and losing sight of his progressive values. But his careerism can't prevent Muncie, played by the versatile Emmy winner Colman Domingo, from getting dragged into a war between the far right and the radical left, edgelord billionaires and misfits living communally at society's fringes. In fact, that war threatens to annihilate everything he's achieved.

It's a timely premise, following an election that empowered one extreme, alienated the other, and left us with an even more chaotic public square than we had before. Creator Stephen Belber (*Tommy*) and his co-showrunner, VJ Boyd (*Justified*), channel our collective exhaustion with the discourse into a '70s-style paranoid thriller grounded in the partisan polarization of today. *The Madness* can traffic in false equivalences—a pitfall of political fiction that values moderation as an end in itself. And the show sometimes gets goofy in depicting the factions' personalities and peccadilloes. Still, it mostly succeeds, on the strength of Domingo's performance, Muncie's complexity, and, above all, the visceral sense of contemporary chaos and futility it channels.

Muncie is hoping to get away from it all when he rents a cabin in the Poconos to work on his novel. What he's escaping includes an ex (Marsha Stephanie Blake) he still loves, the couple's resentful teenage son (Thaddeus J. Mixson), an adult daughter (Gabrielle Graham) he has neglected, a colleague who all but calls him a sellout on national TV, and, deeper in his consciousness, unresolved angst surrounding his father, who let otherwise laudable ideals lead him into violence. Instead of penning a best seller, Muncie finds he's being framed for a local white supremacist's murder, which he happens to have been the only person to witness.

A PUNDIT WHO TRADED strong convictions for a mainstream platform and his family's stability for personal success, Muncie suddenly becomes a fugitive shouldering the weight of everything he worked to transcend, from systemic racism to the sins of his father, while facing dark forces far more powerful than a few neo-Nazis. Once a ringmaster of the media circus, he's now the caged lion. And he has to discern which of the few allies who believe he's innocent—a fringe media personality (Bri Neal), the victim's



▲
Muncie
(Domingo)
is caught in
the media
maelstrom he
once controlled

**A '70s-style
paranoid
thriller
grounded in
the partisan
polarization
of today**

estranged widow (Tamsin Topolski), an FBI agent with an agenda of his own (John Ortiz)—he can actually trust. It's at once a terrifying situation and a chance to finally develop an appreciation for his loyal friends and family. Conveyed by Domingo with subtlety and intelligence, this level of detail makes Muncie the rare richly drawn hero in a genre that tends to privilege plot over character.

Less convincing, at times, are the details of the world-gone-mad he inhabits. In its quest to frame both ends of the political spectrum as unhinged, the show occasionally verges on cartoonish. Is it not enough to have Muncie visit a militant antifa "gun commune"—does the guy he's looking for there have to frequent swinger bars too? Yet *The Madness* resonates, thanks largely to its atmosphere of panic, fueled by anxiety that Muncie is a pawn of nefarious individuals with the wealth to bend society to their will and underscored by inventive action sequences. Now that so many political thrillers, from *Citadel* to *Hijack*, go out of their way to avoid political fault lines for fear of offending any potential viewer, it's a relief to have a show that at least acknowledges how very frantic the vibes have become. □



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Charles Yu

The author of *Interior Chinatown* on adapting the novel for a Hulu series, the rise of AI, and the importance of empathy

Interior Chinatown was published in early 2020. How did everything that's happened since impact how you wrote the TV adaptation? We started a writers room over Zoom in 2022, and it was really on our minds how the world in which we'd all see each other again would be so different: on the heels of George Floyd, Jan. 6, the wave of anti-Asian sentiment. On one level, the novel is about how Asians are invisible in the American public imagination, which felt more relevant than ever. But I also felt like it could be about so much more, and that it needed to be.

The show follows Willis, a waiter who longs to become the main character of his own story. What advice do you have for anyone on a similar journey? Don't be afraid of looking dumb. I'm 48, and it wasn't until I became a dad and very cringey that I realized that is something I wish I had been willing to do when I was 28. I was terrified at work: of getting up and talking in front of even five people. So it sounds like such a platitude, but if you're gonna break out of your role, it starts with you believing you can.

How did writing on HBO's *Westworld* shape *Interior Chinatown*? It inspired the idea of seeing the edge of the set: The story and then the people behind the story. In the *Westworld* theme park, there are all these robots, and you may never encounter most of them. Their existence kind of spun me out. What if you're just a robot who's off in some dusty side quest, and nobody does your side quest? What is your life like?

What did you learn from Taika Waititi (*Thor: Ragnarok*), who served as an EP and directed the pilot? He can take a script and loosen up the connective tissue, to both

What was the biggest challenge in adapting your novel to screen?

In a novel you can slip into someone's consciousness. Gifted filmmakers know how to create subjectivity and interiority, to tell a story that has forward movement but can live in your thoughts. I learned how to better use silence and negative space.



soften and scuff it up. He's looking for both visual and emotional nuance: less polished but more human.

In 2020, you wrote an essay for TIME about the lack of Asian American representation on TV. Has anything changed? There has been noticeable progress, at least from a Hollywood perspective, in the variety and specificity of stories being told. The question is, what do we do with doors that are now open, that weren't for a long time?

Amid Donald Trump's re-election, what do you make of the growing backlash against diversity and inclusion efforts? It is important to hear a diversity of voices. But I feel like what I don't hear in the conversation is empathy, and I include that from my side. Nobody likes to be told that something is important for its own sake. Now, it's not some complicated conversation. You can grow up not reading anything about Native Americans, Black Americans, or Asian Americans—and that's a huge problem because it's not reality. The point of asking people to read marginalized narratives is so they'll see the human stories of the people telling them. But that has to go both ways. It's important for all of us to not devalue the perspective of people who have different value systems.

Having dealt with AI on *Westworld*, what do you make of its recent real-world advancements? It's weird to have worked on something less than 10 years ago and see that it's not so sci-fi. I totally believe an AI could write a better rom-com or buddy comedy than I could. But there's people who have something it'll be harder to capture, and there's something magical about that. I don't think there's an AI Taika Waititi, for instance. —ANDREW R. CHOW



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