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Headlines friday 30 june 2023

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Zac Goldsmith, a Tory peer, said the UK had ‘stepped off the world stage and withdrawn our leadership on climate and nature.’ Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

[Zac Goldsmith](#)

Zac Goldsmith resigns accusing Sunak of being ‘uninterested’ in environment

Outgoing minister attacks PM but No 10 claims he quit after being asked to apologise over privileges committee criticism

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[Rowena Mason](#) and [Helena Horton](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 07.46 EDTFirst published on Fri 30 Jun 2023 04.23 EDT

Zac Goldsmith has resigned as a minister, accusing Rishi Sunak of being “uninterested” in the environment – but No 10 claimed he quit after being

told to apologise for undermining the parliamentary inquiry into Boris Johnson.

The Conservative peer and former MP published a long resignation letter detailing his disappointment with the prime minister for causing “paralysis” on the environment within Whitehall and choosing to attend the party of a media baron rather than an international environmental forum.

However, Sunak hit back with a letter saying Goldsmith had been asked to say sorry for a tweet that appeared to challenge the privileges committee inquiry into whether Johnson misled parliament.

The prime minister said Goldsmith’s comments were “incompatible” with his job in government and he had been asked to apologise but “decided a different course”.

In response, Goldsmith said he had been happy to acknowledge he should not have commented on the privileges committee and denied this was the cause of his resignation.

He said: “Our parliamentary democracy can only be strengthened by robust exchange and self-criticism and parliamentarians should absolutely be free to be critical of its reports and proceedings.

“But as a minister it is true to say that I shouldn’t have commented publicly. No 10 asked me to acknowledge that and I was and am happy to do so.

“My decision to step down has been a long time coming. When I compare what I and my amazing team were able to do before the current PM took office with the slow progress today, it seems to me I can no longer justify being in government.”

Goldsmith’s accusations are likely to be unhelpful to Sunak in the lead-up to an election, with opposition parties expected to emphasise the government’s failure to do enough on the climate emergency, animal welfare and sewage discharges.

Ed Miliband, the shadow energy secretary, called Goldsmith's departure a "devastating indictment of Rishi Sunak and his whole government on climate and nature".

It has been a privilege to have been able to make a difference to a cause I have been committed to for as long as I remember. But this govt's apathy in the face of the greatest challenge we face makes continuing in my role untenable. Reluctantly I am therefore stepping down pic.twitter.com/KDJKN3i6ER

— Zac Goldsmith (@ZacGoldsmith) [June 30, 2023](#)

On Thursday the [privileges committee named Goldsmith](#) as one of the politicians who had undermined its work on whether Johnson misled parliament. The Liberal Democrats called on Sunak to sack Goldsmith because of the committee's findings that eight politicians had put "improper pressure" on its inquiry.

The committee highlighted that Goldsmith had retweeted a tweet calling the inquiry a witch-hunt and kangaroo court and added: "Exactly this. There was only ever going to be one outcome and the evidence was totally irrelevant to it."

In his letter stepping down from the Foreign Office, where his portfolio was overseas territories, Commonwealth, environment, energy and climate, Goldsmith said it had been a privilege to work as an environment minister, particularly under Johnson.

He said he had been horrified by the Sunak government's "abandonment" of policies around animal welfare, and that its efforts on environmental issues at home had "simply ground to a standstill".

Addressing Sunak directly, the Tory peer said: "Prime minister, having been able to get so much done previously, I have struggled even to hold the line in recent months. The problem is not that the government is hostile to the environment, it is that you, our prime minister, are simply uninterested. That

signal, or lack of it, has trickled down through Whitehall and caused a kind of paralysis.”

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He added: “This government’s apathy in the face of the greatest challenge we have faced makes continuing in my current role untenable.”

Goldsmith claimed the UK had “visibly stepped off the world stage and withdrawn our leadership on climate and nature”. He wrote: “Too often we are simply absent from key international fora. Only last week you seemingly chose to attend the party of a media baron rather than attend a critically important environment summit in Paris that ordinarily the UK would have co-led.”

It is understood Goldsmith had been feeling uneasy about Sunak’s commitment to the environment since the beginning of his premiership, when the prime minister had to be cajoled into attending Cop27.

The Conservative peer told friends at the time that he was considering resigning from a government that had seemingly deprioritised the environment and the natural world, a view that was cemented by a tussle over nature-based payments for farmers.

However, he planned to stay in post for as long as it took to get the [international forest agreement](#), agreed at Cop26, over the line. The deal between more than 100 leaders to save the world's forests, partly made possible with funding from the UK, was seen as one of the great successes of the climate summit.

This month the peer made up his mind to resign when Sunak's government scrapped the [kept animals bill](#) after pressure from the hunting lobby, which was concerned that hunting hounds would be affected by its measures. The legislation would have cracked down on puppy farming as well as banning keeping primates as pets and banning live exports of farm animals. Friends say Goldsmith was "sickened" by the decision and wrote to Sunak begging him to reconsider, but that letter was ignored.

After learning that international development funding to protect forests would not be honoured by Sunak, allies of Goldsmith say he made the final decision to quit.

Goldsmith, a longtime ally of Johnson and his wife, Carrie, has resigned from a post before for environmental reasons, when he triggered a byelection over the issue of Heathrow expansion in his then seat of Richmond.

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Goldsmith accused the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, of being ‘uninterested’ in environment issues. Photograph: Tayfun Salcı/ZUMA Press Wire/REX/Shutterstock

[Zac Goldsmith](#)

Zac Goldsmith’s resignation letter in full

Conservative peer says he is ‘horrified’ by government abandoning environmental commitments

- [Zac Goldsmith resigns](#)
- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

PA Media

Fri 30 Jun 2023 05.14 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 21.31 EDT

The Foreign Office minister Zac Goldsmith has [announced his resignation](#) over what he described as government “apathy” towards the environment.

Here is his resignation letter in full:

Dear prime minister,

I became involved in politics above all because of my love and concern for the natural environment. We depend on nature for everything, and we are degrading the natural world at an astonishing speed. Logically, there is nothing more important.

So when you asked me to stay on as minister for the international environment, I of course accepted. I did so with a view to guarding the progress we had seen in recent years on the international environment, and to building on a record of international leadership that has been so warmly welcomed around the world.

The past four years have been an exhilarating experience for me, and I will forever be grateful that I was put in a position where I could do more for the environment than I thought possible in a lifetime.

I'm proud that in recent years the UK has played a critical, indeed defining role – leading powerful coalitions of ambition and securing world-changing commitments over a very wide range of environmental issues.

And even if in the highly polarised political environment here in the UK there is an unwillingness to acknowledge it, that leadership has been recognised and appreciated by civil society and governments around the world.

As a direct consequence of our environmental leadership, we have seen countries previously ambivalent towards the UK stepping up to support us on numerous unrelated issues. We often find ourselves invited to regional environmental summits as the only “outsider” country present.

It is the UK that civil society routinely turns to for help advancing their cause. In many respects, the UK has become the single most important voice for nature globally.

I believe we can be proud of our record. At Cop26 we secured unprecedented commitments from countries, philanthropists and businesses that – if delivered – will put the natural world on the road to recovery. At the time, WWF said “Nature truly arrived at Cop26”.

The Tropical Forest Alliance said “we’ll look back and realise that this was the day we finally turned the tide on deforestation”. Forbes called it a “Paris moment” for forests. In Glasgow, with strong support from the then prime minister, we were able to achieve far more than any of us ever thought possible.

Since then, the UK has been the driving force behind successful global efforts. We led calls to protect 30% of the world’s land and ocean by the end of this decade, a goal that was agreed at the Biodiversity Cop in Montreal last year where the UK did more than almost any other country to make it a historic success.

Separately we helped galvanise agreement for a new global treaty on plastic pollution. And it was our team of negotiators who – more than any other – secured an agreement for the creation of new laws to protect the high seas.

Our G7 negotiators meanwhile persuaded the main donor countries to align their aid spending not only with the Paris goals, but with nature too.

We have created world-class funding programmes like our new biodiverse landscapes fund, which is creating vast wildlife corridors between countries, providing safe passage for wildlife and jobs for people living in and around the corridors; and our new blue planet fund, which is supporting marine protection, coral and mangrove restoration, and efforts to stop plastic pollution and illegal fishing.

These and other funds are world-class and have leveraged a wave of financial support from other countries and philanthropists.

It has been my privilege to grow our wonderful Blue Belt programme so that today it fully protects an area of ocean significantly larger than India around our overseas territories.

The UK has been able to win arguments internationally in part because we were taking action at home. I won't pretend we have gone nearly far or fast enough, but there is no doubt that since 2019 we have made meaningful progress.

We strengthened our environmental laws, provided more funding for nature, committed to more protected areas, more action on plastic pollution, and the UK is one of the only countries with legal targets to reverse biodiversity loss.

We have committed to restore our peatlands and plant trees on an unprecedented scale and we are transforming our land subsidy system to support the environment. We have also taken steps to address our international environmental footprint, including new laws stopping the import to the UK of agricultural commodities grown on illegally deforested land.

We also made progress on animal welfare. The government signed off an ambitious action plan for animal welfare, which would have represented the biggest shake up of animal welfare in living memory.

As minister responsible I was able to translate it, bit by bit, into law. We increased sentencing for cruelty from six months to five years, we recognised in law the sentience of animals, enacted and extended the ivory trade ban, introduced measures to break the pet smuggling trade and banned glue traps.

Before you took office, you assured party members, via me, that you would continue implementing the action plan, including the kept animals bill and measures like ending the live export of animals for slaughter, banning keeping primates as pets, preventing the import of shark fins and hunting trophies from vulnerable species.

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But I have been horrified as, bit by bit, we have abandoned these commitments – domestically and on the world stage. The kept animals bill has been ditched, despite your promises. Our efforts on a wide range of domestic environmental issues have simply ground to a standstill.

More worrying, the UK has visibly stepped off the world stage and withdrawn our leadership on climate and nature. Too often we are simply absent from key international fora. Only last week you seemingly chose to attend the party of a media baron rather than attend a critically important environment summit in Paris that ordinarily the UK would have co-led.

Worse still, we have effectively abandoned one of the most widely reported and solemn promises we have made on this issue: our pledge to spend £11.6bn of our aid on climate and environment.

Indeed the only reason the government has not had to come clean on the broken promise is because the final year of expenditure falls after the next general election and will therefore be the problem for the next government, not this one.

This is a promise, remember, that has been consistently repeated by prime ministers in the past four years, including by you, and for good reason.

It is the single most important signal of intent [sic] for the dozens of small island and climate-vulnerable states on an issue that is existential for them. These states, remember, have equal sway in the UN where we routinely seek their support on other issues.

That same promise was also used successfully by the UK as leverage to persuade G7 countries to follow suit, and breaking it would not only infuriate them, along with those small island states in the Commonwealth and beyond – it would shred any reputation we have for being a reliable partner.

Prime minister, having been able to get so much done previously, I have struggled even to hold the line in recent months.

The problem is not that the government is hostile to the environment, it is that you, our prime minister, are simply uninterested. That signal, or lack of it, has trickled down through Whitehall and caused a kind of paralysis.

I will never understand how, with all the knowledge we now have about our fundamental reliance on the natural world and the speed with which we are destroying it, anyone can be uninterested.

But even if this existential challenge leaves you personally unmoved, there is a world of people who do care very much. And you will need their votes.

Every survey and poll – without exception – tells us that people care deeply about the natural world, about the welfare of other species, about handing this world in better shape to the next generation. And as these issues inevitably grow in importance, so too will the gap between the British people and a Conservative party that fails to respond appropriately.

It has been a privilege to be able to work with so many talented people in government, in particular my private office, and to have been able to make a difference to a cause I have been committed to for as long as I remember.

But this government's apathy in the face of the greatest challenge we have faced makes continuing in my current role untenable.

With great reluctance I am therefore stepping down as a minister in order to focus my energy where it can be more useful.

Zac Goldsmith

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The new calculator uses data including engine and fuel type, occupancy and exact journey distance to calculate the emissions released. Photograph: Alamy

[Transport](#)

Carbon emissions from UK rail travel lower than previously thought

Rail industry group commissioned a new tool to calculate the industry's carbon footprint more accurately

[Anna Turns](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

Rail travel is far more carbon efficient than previously thought, according to a rail industry group that has commissioned a new tool for calculating emissions.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG), the association of train companies and National Rail that works to coordinate Britain's railways, commissioned the

development of the tool so that they could measure their carbon footprint properly.

The calculator, developed by Thrust Carbon, a sustainability intelligence platform, uses seven sets of data – including engine and fuel type, occupancy and carriage layout, and exact journey distance – to more accurately measure the footprint.

“The more granular you can get with the data, the better decisions can be made,” says Kit Brennan, founder and head of product at Thrust Carbon, who led the project.

Previously the calculation had been based on the UK government’s annual “[greenhouse gas conversion factors for company reporting](#)” data which involves one simple calculation – total energy consumed by the national rail network divided by total reported number of passenger kilometres travelled.

On the electrified rail route from London King’s Cross to Edinburgh Waverley station, figures showed emissions per passenger were 24kg/CO₂e, where CO₂e is a measurement used to show the total greenhouse gases emitted as an equivalent of carbon dioxide.

The first result from RDG’s new carbon calculator confirms this figure is actually 12.5kg/CO₂e – approximately half the previous estimation, and 10 times less carbon than car travel or 13 times less than the equivalent flight.

The new calculations are part of the rail industry’s [green travel pledge](#) that aims to make travel sustainability information clearer so that travellers can make informed choices between transport options such as plane and car. This calculator will also enable businesses to measure their carbon emissions from rail travel more effectively.

“We want to empower businesses to make greener travel choices,” said Jacqueline Starr, RDG’s chief executive, who plans to make detailed carbon calculations for rail routes across Britain available by the end of the year.

Fuel use is a major factor, but there are also operational efficiencies to consider, Brennan said: “So, if a train runs but is completely empty, and you’re breaking down your emissions on a specific train then perhaps ticket prices should be lower to encourage more people to take those trains.”

He hopes that greater transparency with carbon emissions may add an element of healthy competition between rail operators that use the same train line: “That’s good because it encourages rail operators to invest in their trains, to have newer, more energy-efficient trains, and to lobby government to electrify more of the lines for the same reasons.”

[Latest statistics from the Office of Rail and Road](#) show that in 2021-2022, just 2km of track were electrified in Great Britain. “Basically HM Treasury has pulled the plug on electrification,” said Richard Hebditch, UK director at Transport & Environment, an organisation that campaigns for cleaner transport across Europe. “This new research from Thrust Carbon shows how electrified routes are clearly miles better for carbon savings, so it should be common sense for the government to have a rolling programme to electrify the rail network.”

“It’s basically stupid to have so many diesel-only routes, and older, polluting trains travelling around the system,” said Hebditch, who described the contrast between the old and new data as “dramatic”. He explains that the new calculator will not only show the variation of CO₂ emissions between different rail routes but it will be possible to get a more accurate comparison between aviation and rail as well.

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“This should be a catalyst for better understanding what’s on the railway and for showing that train travel is really good for minimal CO₂,” said Hebditch. “This shows the clear case of the environmental advantages of supporting it. Hopefully, more [trains] will start to be electrified, routes can be decarbonised and we might see newer trains with regenerative braking that put energy back into the system.”

Clive Wratten, chief executive at the Business Travel Association, said: “We’ve heard loud and clear from our members and the business travel community that consistency in carbon measurement is an imperative. This initiative from RDG on behalf of the whole rail industry has the potential to provide clarity and a robust green message to all parts of business travel.”

Once rail carbon information is displayed at point of sale, booking sustainable travel will be easier, especially when comparisons between rail journeys and flights are listed, Brennan said. “All our tools are about making sustainability effortless,” he added.

Plane or train?

A trip from Edinburgh to London on, say Monday 3 July, by train would start at £59, according to Trainline. It would take upwards of four hours and 40 minutes, and according to Thrust Carbon, would emit about 12.5kg of CO₂ per passenger

A plane ticket from Edinburgh to London Gatwick on the same day would start at £65 (easyJet via Opodo) and take 1.15 hours (although that doesn’t include waiting times after check-in). And [it would emit](#) about 131kg of CO₂.

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2023.06.30 - Spotlight

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Brothers of Italy, the party of Giorgia Meloni, the Italian prime minister, has neofascist roots. Photograph: Luca Zennaro/EPA

[The far right](#)

How Europe's far right is marching steadily into the mainstream

Whether in Italy, Spain, France or Finland, parties that were once outcasts are fast gaining respectability – and power



[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*

[@jonhenley](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 04.55 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 11.55 EDT

Almost 25 years ago, when Jörg Haider's far-right populist Freedom party (FPÖ) won just under 27% of the vote and entered government in Austria, the shock waves reverberated around Europe. Diplomatic visits were cancelled and [punitive measures imposed](#).

Not long after, when Jean-Marie Le Pen of France's National Front (now National Rally or RN) [reached the presidential runoff](#), the eventual winner, Jacques Chirac, refused even to debate with the far-right leader, so abhorrent – and abnormal – were his views.

But now across western [Europe](#), far-right parties are advancing: climbing steadily up the polls, shaping the policies of the mainstream right to reflect nativist and populist platforms, and occupying select ministerial roles in coalition governments.

[Graphic showing left-right parliamentary alignment in Europe by country](#)

Giorgia Meloni, whose party has neofascist roots, is prime minister of Italy, and Spain's far-right Vox, after [recently doubling its regional and local vote](#),

could soon be sharing power nationally.

The far right is part of the new coalition government in Finland and, in exchange for key policy concessions, is propping up another in Sweden. Back in Austria, the FPÖ is comfortably ahead in the polls, roughly a year from the next election.

In a “watershed moment” in the Germany’s politics, the country’s far-right AfD has just [won its first district council election](#), after surging in the past year from 10% to 20% and into second place in the polls, ahead of the centre-left SPD.

In Greece, a [trio of little-known hard-right and nationalist parties won parliamentary seats](#) in Sunday’s elections. They included the three-week-old Spartans, backed, from his prison cell, by a leading light of the now defunct neo-Nazi Golden Dawn.

[Graph showing how Italy’s parliament has changed in composition since 1950](#)

“They are all different, and the cultures and political systems they operate in are all different,” said Catherine Fieschi, director of policy at Open Society Foundations Europe and an expert on populism, authoritarianism and the far right.

“But after every crisis, we have told ourselves that the populists and far right are waning in Europe, and the fact is they have been rising more or less steadily, with a few interruptions, since the 1980s. They are really now a part of the landscape.”

What’s more, Europe’s increasingly fragmented and polarised politics means “a 48/52 split basically turns these parties into kingmakers. That’s what happened in the Nordics, will probably happen in Spain, [and] could happen in [France](#),” Fieschi said.

“In Italy and [Austria](#) there are additional factors – a far right that was never really rejected postwar, disenchantment with a system that feels rigged and

inefficient – and in Germany, it’s all about the east and the weakness of the current coalition.”

For long, opposition to immigration, Islam and the EU were what united Europe’s far-right parties. New causes have now also emerged: the culture wars, minority rights, the climate crisis and the unfair sacrifices that governments insist will be needed to combat it.

Their appeal has been further enhanced by the cost of living crisis flowing from pandemic recovery and Russia’s war on Ukraine; by rapid and confusing social and digital change and, everywhere, by mounting mistrust of the mainstream.

[Graph showing how France’s parliament has changed in composition since 1950](#)

But behind the surge, there also lies a two-way process of normalisation: as the centre right increasingly adopts far-right talking points and opens itself up for deals, smart far-right parties moderate some of their more voter-repellent views.

From Italy to [Finland](#), much of Europe’s centre right is as hardline on immigration as the far right, while far-right parties are busy projecting economic discipline, dialling back on Euroscepticism and downplaying past support for Russia.

“The far right’s rise has coincided with the decline of a certain kind of left,” Fieschi said. “Far-right parties now seem like a reasonable vote for many of the people who in previous circumstances would have voted for a popular, protective left.”

What has changed, she said, is that we live “in the era of control. The Brexiters got that. The left may promise protection, but the far right promises order and control. It can’t necessarily deliver it – but it speaks more to people’s individual and cultural fears.”

Italy

Giorgia Meloni became western Europe's first far-right postwar prime minister after her Brothers of Italy won nearly 26% of the vote [in September elections](#) (up from 4% in 2018) and she successfully formed a coalition with Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia and Matteo Salvini's anti-migrant League, both of which scored more than 8%. Her strategy since has been focused on normalisation – economic orthodoxy, support for Ukraine, good relations with Brussels – while quietly prosecuting her culture war at home.



Giorgia Meloni, prime minister of Italy since 2022, has sought to normalise her Brothers of Italy party. Photograph: Fabio Frustaci/EPA

Spain

Founded almost a decade ago, the nationalist Catholic-conservative Vox is now the third-largest party in Spain's national assembly and last month [doubled its vote in regional and municipal elections](#), striking deals with the centre-right People's party (PP) to rule the Valencia region and several big Spanish cities in coalitions. Polls suggest the PP will win next month's snap general election but fall short of an absolute majority and the prospect of it [seeking Vox's support to form a government is looking increasingly likely](#).

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The nationalist, Catholic-conservative Vox, led by Santiago Abascal, is the third-largest party in Spain's national assembly. Photograph: Thomas Coex/AFP/Getty Images

France

Marine Le Pen scored a record 41.46% in [last year's presidential election](#), and her far-right National Rally (RN) went on to win 89 of the 577 seats in parliament, an 11-fold increase. As the biggest single opposition party, it is

[striving to show discipline and responsibility](#) in an effort to further sanitise its image and bury longstanding accusations of racism and xenophobia. Sidestepping its traditional France-for-the-French agenda, it says it has only one objective: the “concrete improvement of French people’s lives”. Four years out from the next presidential election, [polls have suggested](#) Le Pen would win a runoff held today.



Polls suggest that Marine Le Pen would win a French presidential election held today. Photograph: Le Tellec Stephane/Abaca/Shutterstock

The Netherlands

Three nationalist populist parties – Geert Wilders’ anti-Islam Freedom party (PVV); the libertarian, conspiracist and pro-Russian Forum for Democracy (FvD) of Thierry Baudet; and its supposedly more moderate offshoot, JA21 – hold 28 of the Dutch parliament’s 150 seats. The meteoric [rise in provincial elections this year](#) of a new populist party, the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB), which fights government environmental policies, underlined the fragmented and febrile nature of Dutch politics in the run up to national elections, due by March 2025.



A supporter of the Dutch far-right politician Geert Wilders displays a leaflet saying Make the Netherlands Ours Again. Photograph: John Thys/AFP/Getty Images

Germany

[Sunday's district election win](#) by the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in eastern Germany could herald the end of the longstanding “firewall” thrown up by a united mainstream against the far-right party. Experts say the anti-AfD front is crumbling, at least at a local level in disgruntled eastern Germany, and the party now believes it can win state elections due next year in Thuringia, Brandenburg and Saxony. Opinion polls suggest that at the national level – faced with inflation, recession, rising refugee numbers and a fractious coalition government – voters favour the xenophobic, anti-Islam AfD more than the chancellor, Olaf Scholz's, Social Democrats.



AfD's district election win on Sunday was considered a 'watershed moment'. Photograph: Maximilian Schwarz/Reuters

Austria

One of Europe's oldest far-right movements, the Freedom party (FPÖ), founded in 1956 and first led by a former Nazi functionary and SS officer, is polling at 28%, five points clear of the centre-right ÖVP with which it first entered government after the 1999 elections, and six ahead of the centre-left SPÖ. Its past record and outspoken pro-Moscow views may, however, make it difficult for the party to form a coalition even if it wins next year's vote. As with neighbouring **Hungary**, support for Russia remains – for the time being beyond the western European pale.

Finland

The influence of the far-right Finns party in [Finland's new four-party coalition government](#) – the most rightwing in the country's history – is clear: cutting refugee quotas, raising the bar for work-based immigration, making citizenship harder to obtain and establishing separate benefit systems for immigrants and permanent residents. Experts have said the prime minister, Petteri Orpo of the centre-right National Coalition party – which has 48 seats

in parliament to the Finns' 46 – took a hard line on immigration in order to gain support for €6bn of spending cuts.

Sweden

After a narrow win by the rightwing bloc in [elections last September](#), the conservative Moderates formed a minority coalition with two other centre-right parties that relies – in exchange for a say in policy – on the parliamentary backing of the far-right Sweden Democrats: the first time the nativist party, which won 20.5% of the vote, has had direct input in a government programme. Long unthinkable, the decision to include the far right in policymaking has produced radical changes in Sweden's approach to law and order, asylum, immigration and integration.



Supporters of the far-right Sweden Democrats welcome the results of the exit polls at the election last September. Photograph: Tt News Agency/Reuters

Britain

The far right may not be formally represented in Westminster, but analysts argue that populism, nativism and cultural conservatism have long dictated certain centre-right policy positions. They cite nationalist sloganeering by

government ministers and Conservative MPs before and since the Brexit referendum; an immigration policy – and related rhetoric – that are arguably tougher than those of any continental European government; and an unabashed “war on woke”.

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The UK swift population fell by 58% from 1995-2018. Photograph: Ben Andrew/RSPB

[The age of extinction](#)[Birds](#)

**Brick by brick: the British
manufacturers building a better future**

for birds

It takes just under a minute to make a single swift brick that could house generations of migratory birds. So why isn't it compulsory to install them in the UK?

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[Emma Snaith](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

At first, it is hard to spot. A small hole in the eaves is often all that can be seen. It's only on closer inspection that a hollow brick can be discerned, slotted neatly into a wall. Inside might be a pair of nesting swifts that have travelled thousands of miles from Africa to the UK.

At Manthorpe Building Products' factory in Derbyshire, it takes just under a minute to produce a single swift brick that could provide a safe haven for generations of these migratory birds. Granules of recycled plastic are put into an injection moulding machine and, moments later, the separate parts of the brick come out, before a worker snaps them together.

Manthorpe has already made 20,000 bricks. Dozens of workers in hi-vis vests group around futuristic-looking machines, producing a wide range of building products from loft hatches to drains. Yet it's the swift bricks that have proved a surprise hit, with demand steadily increasing year on year, says the company's managing director, Paul Manning.



The Manthorpe swift nesting brick is made from long-lasting PVC and polypropylene. Photograph: Courtesy of Manthorpe Building Products

Things could be about to get busier. A [petition](#) to make swift bricks compulsory in all new housing in the UK has more than 100,000 signatures and will be debated in parliament on 10 July. It will be an uphill battle, though. In its response to the petition, the government made clear that it “considers this a matter for local authorities depending upon the specific circumstances of each site”.

Swift bricks work just as well in inner city areas with very little green space as they do anywhere else

Guy Anderson, RSPB

Campaigners argue that these bricks are desperately needed amid the relentless decline of swifts in the UK. The species was added to the [“red list” of endangered birds in 2021](#) after its population fell by 58% from 1995-2018.

Swifts are celebrated for their endurance, spending 10 months of the year [entirely airborne](#). They feed on insects and mate in the sky, they drink by gliding over smooth water and bathe by flying slowly through rain. To sleep, they close one eye and half of their brain at a time. Swifts only land to breed, returning to the same nest site for a few short months to raise their young.

However, renovations in old buildings are closing up the holes in walls where they used to nest and new buildings block them out, too. Plummeting insect populations are also a factor in the species’ decline but nest loss is a problem with a simple solution: swift bricks and boxes.



A swift visiting a Manthorpe swift brick installed by a private householder.
Photograph: Nicky Chambers

Bricks are the preferred option as they slot discreetly into a wall, offer a cooler environment for the birds, do not require any maintenance and should last the lifetime of a building. The first swift bricks were designed about 30 years ago, but since then there has been a huge rise in demand with dozens of models now available. Prices vary between £15 and £176 and many are compatible with UK brick sizes, meeting the requirements of the [British Standard for internal built-in nest boxes](#) for swifts and other wildlife.

Developed in conjunction with the [RSPB](#) and the house building industry, the brick being produced by Manthorpe has a grippy finish in the entrance tunnel to help swifts land, a concave dish to make nest building easier, as well as internal channels for drainage, and tabs to aid bricklaying. Mike Challinor, the development and technical director at Manthorpe, tested a range of 3D prototypes, from a binocular-shaped model to one with an external ledge, before settling on the final design. “The brick had to work for the housebuilder as well as the swifts because they wouldn’t be used otherwise,” he says.

Swifts are our closest wild neighbours and the poster children of biodiversity. If they lose, we lose

Hannah Bourne-Taylor

Ibstock is another swift brick manufacturer that has seen demand grow, with 7,000 units sold so far. The design of the slim clay box evolved after the discovery that some bricklayers were fitting them upside down. “If that happens, the swift chicks may not be able to get out of the hole,” says Ian Downie, Ibstock’s national specials champion. Ibstock began spraying “top” on the boxes with a picture to prevent this happening, while a nesting ledge was also added inside “to prevent the eggs from rolling out”.



A swift poking its head out of a nesting brick on the side of a new house in Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire. Photograph: Ben Andrew/RSPB

Swift bricks are usually installed in new buildings or during major renovations, but it is possible to retrofit them into an existing wall. Action for Swifts founder Dick Newell designed [the S Brick](#) for this purpose and has sold 3,000 of them since 2020. As well as supplying individual swift enthusiasts, the organisation recently sold 30 bricks to a Cambridge project after it forgot to install nest sites. Newell laments that “new houses exclude all wildlife” and estimates that we need at least 250,000 swift bricks and boxes in place to restore swift numbers lost in the last 25 years.

“The great advantage of swift bricks and boxes is that they can work just as well in inner city areas with very little green space as anywhere else,” says Dr Guy Anderson, the RSPB’s migratory birds programme manager. “Swifts can travel pretty long distances to find their insect food – all they need is a nest site.” Even if swifts don’t make a home in them, the bricks can be used by other species, including house martins, starlings, great tits and house sparrows.



Swifts spend 10 months a year entirely airborne, nesting only to raise their young. Photograph: Nick Upton/Alamy

Examples of swift brick victories include redevelopments of housing estates, such as the [Windmill Estate in South Cambridgeshire](#) where more than 250 swift bricks and boxes have been installed since 2009. Barratt Developments has installed more than 4,000 swift bricks in new housing developments since 2016 – with plans for 7,000 by 2025 – and there are at least 68 local authority and neighbourhood plans with wording for nest box or swift brick provision, according to the Swift Local Network group. The RSPB says that since Brighton and Hove city council introduced a [planning condition](#) requiring new buildings to include swift bricks, at least 130 of them have been installed across the city.

Some campaigners argue, however, that this provision is too patchy and that a national strategy is required. Hannah Bourne-Taylor, who started the petition to make swift bricks compulsory across the UK, says that such a policy could help the government meet its biodiversity targets and is a “no-brainer” in terms of its simplicity and effectiveness. “Swifts are our closest wild neighbours and the poster children of biodiversity,” she says. “If they lose, we lose.”

Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features

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Illustration: Joren Joshua/The Guardian

[You be the judge](#)[Life and style](#)

You be the judge: should my sister clean up after herself when our parents are

away?

Matt gets frustrated that Natalie lets dishes pile up. She enjoys a respite from parental rules. Whose argument won't wash with you?

[Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)



[Georgina Lawton](#)

[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

The prosecution: Matt

Natalie turns into a slob the minute Mum and Dad go on holiday. I come home to flies buzzing around in the kitchen

My younger sister, Natalie, is a sneaky one. When she's at home with Mum and Dad she's very tidy, but when it's just us in the house her true self comes out.

Natalie is 19 and is in a part-time apprenticeship, while I am 25 and work full-time, as do my parents. They are both teachers and get more time off

than Natalie and me, so they often go on holiday for weeks at a time and leave us at home.

My mum says that in their absence I need to look after Natalie and keep the house tidy, but once they're out the door I have little to no jurisdiction over my sister. Freed from their watchful eyes, she turns into a slob.

She forgets to wipe down surfaces after cooking breakfast, and leaves unwashed pans out all day

Mum can be quite strict, so maybe Natalie sees their holidays as a chance to have some time off, but I find it hard to manage. It is mainly a kitchen problem. Natalie will let plates pile up for days without rinsing the food off. We have a dishwasher but she is too lazy to stack it. I'll come home from work and there will be flies buzzing around. It's not nice.

She forgets to wipe down surfaces after cooking breakfast, and has left unwashed pans out all day. If I tell her off she says: "You can't tell me what to do", and leaves the kitchen in a huff. She also gets annoyed if I do a food shop without running everything past her, but I just want to get it done.

She refuses to help out with things like taking out the bins, too, saying it's a "man's job" – and that I should do it when Dad isn't home. I think she just likes to make excuses.

I have told my parents what she is like when they're not around, but Dad doesn't believe me because Natalie is a daddy's girl, and Mum simply tells Natalie to ensure the house is tidy before she returns, which it always is. Annoyingly, Natalie always makes sure everything is cleaned up about 30 minutes before they walk through the door. If I complain in front of them, she denies it was ever messy. I sometimes feel like I'm being gaslit.

The defence: Natalie

When our parents are away, I like to live the way I want. And I always clean everything up before they get back

My parents go away a lot during their school holidays and I definitely like having a free house. Although it's not really free because my brother, Matt, is around. He has got two modes: super relaxed and barely around because he's working or with his friends, or negative and moody because he's hungover and stressed. There is no middle ground with him.

Last summer my parents went to Asia for two weeks and Matt was insufferable. He would come back from work and moan if there were a few crumbs on the counter or a plate in the sink. I was home more often last year because my apprenticeship was fewer hours, so it was natural that I created a bit more mess. But it's not as bad as Matt makes out – I just prefer to let things build up and tidy it all up at the end. I leave pots and pans to soak for a few days before washing them. Our parents would tell me off for that, but when they are away I like to live the way I want.

I stand by the fact that taking the bins out is a man's job

Matt isn't even that tidy, but when our parents aren't around I think he feels as if he has a bit of power over me. But if that's the case, he should use it properly. Our parents leave us a budget for food, but he never asks me what I want when he does the shopping – he just gets the usual stuff and all the things he likes. That's pretty annoying. He should take me into consideration if he wants me to do the same for him.

And I stand by the fact that taking the bins out is a man's job, and Dad agrees. When he got home after one holiday he told Matt to step up to the task. Girls don't take bins out: that's just a fact.

This summer our parents are going to South America for three weeks, I'm off to Spain, and Matt's going to Croatia. There will be 10 days when Matt and I will be in the house alone together. Because he grassed me up to our parents last time, I've decided to make a little more effort to keep the kitchen clean. But only a little. He needs to take a chill pill.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Natalie pick up after herself?

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Natalie knows she's in the wrong, she mentions being "grassed up" by Matt. I think she doesn't want to contribute as she feels entitled as the baby of the house. It's time to grow up and behave like her parents are there.

Frank, 65

As a young adult, Natalie should start taking responsibility for keeping the house clean. But that's hard to do when Matt is deputised as a stand-in parent. They should agree on cleanliness standards while their parents are away and Matt should treat her as his housemate, not his ward.

Kyle, 35

Natalie is guilty. If flies are buzzing around the dishes, it means they've been out for far too long. Also, girls can (and should) also take the bins out in the 21st century. That said, Matt needs to listen to Natalie's requests when doing the shopping. Perhaps she might then be more inclined to clean up after herself.

Ashley, 29

Natalie lost me at bins being a man's job. If she wants gender stereotypes, she should have the house clean, look pretty and have dinner on the table for the all-powerful male of the house, even if he is just a stand-in. Let Matt

enjoy freedom from your parents as well. And the flies.

Alison, 52

They are adults and need to start treating their home and each other that way. How about having a grown-up conversation? Wipe the slate clean, forget about “blue” and “pink” jobs, and figure out how you are going to live together. Then stick to it. It’s only 10 days!

Chris, 45

Now you be the judge

In our online poll below, tell us: should Natalie do more to keep the house clean when her and Matt’s parents are away?

The poll closes at 10am on Thursday 6 July

Last week’s result

We asked if Nathan should stop [dyeing his hair in the sink](#).

94% of you said yes – Nathan is guilty

6% of you said no – Nathan is innocent

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Before the flood: how much longer will the Thames Barrier protect London?

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2023.06.30 - Opinion

- If you want to make cricket truly diverse, don't fixate on bat and ball – focus on what happens in the tea break
- Imagine your child calling for money. Except it's not them – it's an AI scam
- If you think absent pupils are skiving, just try spending a day in my school
- #MeToo has got men quaking in the corridors of power. That's something to celebrate



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

[OpinionCricket](#)

**If you want to make cricket truly
diverse, don't fixate on bat and ball –
focus on what happens in the tea break**

[Mihir Bose](#)



There is a social element to the game that could be an opportunity, but right now heightens the sense of othering and exclusion

Fri 30 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 13.06 EDT

What do they know of cricket who only cricket know, asked the great CLR James. He talked of cricket as a prism through which we might view society, and that remains as true now as in 1963, when [Beyond a Boundary](#), his masterwork, was published. But despite the lofty claims those of us who truly love the game might make for it, cricket cannot offer a true reflection of life or of sport in general. Cricket stands apart. Cricket is different.

That's the first thing to know as we consider a week of an exhilarating Ashes contest, but also the cloud of the damning Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket ([ICEC](#)) report. It found what many of us had long discerned: a beautiful game blighted by "widespread and deep-rooted" racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination at all levels.

In cricket, more than any other game, what happens off the field is as important as what happens on it. In football and rugby, both teams contest the same ball. In tennis, rivals volley over a shared net using the same

equipment. And yet, cricket sees players act in uniquely opposing ways. Eleven teammates gather on the field with a leather ball to stop two batters from scampering 22 yards to score runs. The objective is inherently exclusionary – to make sure the batters are forced off the field of play and relegated to the sidelines.

Cricket has long reeked of the English obsession with class. Until the 1960s, two tiers of cricketers existed: amateurs, who were called gentlemen and had a Mr before their name in the scorecard, and professionals, who were called players. There were even separate changing rooms. The game still retains an inbuilt bias in favour of batters – a great fixture is marked by an abundance of runs, not the number of wickets taken. In such a stratified game, social mingling over the duration of the match acquires a huge significance. There is the expertise and physical dexterity of sport, but there is something more, a dance of human interaction and social norms.

That is both an opportunity for, and a challenge to, integration.

But this integration plainly does not exist in any meaningful sense in English cricket today, a truth laid bare by the 317-page commission report, which drew evidence from more than 4,000 players, coaches, administrators and fans.

Few players highlight this enduring problem of exclusion and othering better than the England all-rounder [Moeen Ali](#). He is one of two Asian players on the English team, despite South Asians accounting for [26-29% of the game's adult recreational population](#) in England and Wales.

In 2018, when I wrote his autobiography, titled Moeen, he spoke of the shock on his teammates' faces when he told them his grandmother's name was Betty Cox. "Nobody could believe it," he told me (his grandfather, an immigrant from Mirpur, Pakistan, had married a widow from Birmingham). "I realise when people look at me and think of my origins they would never think I have a family tree which is a bridge between England and Pakistan. At times I do feel boxed in."

Three years ago, the [revelations](#) of another Asian player, Azeem Rafiq, about the shocking racist abuse he received at Yorkshire cricket club sent

shock waves through the sport. And yet little seems to have changed. He was called the P-word but people “didn’t think it was wrong”, he said at the time of the racist “banter” directed at him, which has become a feature of the sport’s rotten culture.

On a television debate after Rafiq’s testimony to the digital, culture, media and sport select committee on racism in cricket, I got into an argument with a white caller who could not understand why being called the P-word was different to being called a [“pom”](#). I explained that back in 1981, Chelsea football fans assaulted me while calling me the P-word. They were not indulging in “banter”. But he was still not convinced.



‘Azeem Rafiq was called the P-word but people ‘didn’t think it was wrong’.’
Photograph: James Manning/PA

The commission is right to take aim at this culture of minimising discrimination – [“it’s not banter](#) or just a few bad apples” causing the problems, the report reads. For too long, senior leaders in cricket have been in denial about race. When I interviewed the veteran cricket administrator Tim Lamb for my book on creating a non-racial sports world, he said he had found no evidence of racism in the game.

When I asked him about Yorkshire having a separate cricket league run by Asian Muslims, he did not see it as a problem. “The fact of the matter is, rightly or wrongly, there are Asian cricketers and Asian clubs that feel more comfortable playing with their own kind,” he said. “I mean there are cultural differences.”

Then he said something that really rocked me: “Throughout our conversation we’ve talked about racist behaviour on the part of white people against black people, but I’m sure you wouldn’t deny that there is reverse racism by non-white people towards white people.”

Of course, racism isn’t the only deep-rooted issue that needs to be stamped out if the game is to move into the 21st century. The England women’s team are yet to play a Test at Lord’s – the home of English cricket, even though men’s teams from Eton and Harrow [play annual matches there](#). When in 2017 [England’s women won](#) the World Cup against India, the pavilion at Lord’s was not packed out as it was two years later when the men’s team won the World Cup. Within women’s cricket, racism is also evident. Of the [161 female players](#) at professional level, players are disproportionately white, with only two Black British, four mixed/multiple ethnicity and eight South Asian female players.

Perhaps now, things will change. The England and Wales [Cricket](#) Board has called the report’s findings a “seminal moment” for the sport, and has apologised unreservedly. It promised to respond to 44 recommendations within three months. They have a huge task and a moral responsibility.

In India the lotus, the most beautiful of flowers, grows from the muck. It may be too much to ask cricket’s senior leaders to make changes overnight, but there is an opportunity here to improve things for the better and create an inclusive culture that shuns the attitudes of old.

What do we know of cricket? That it lifts the human spirit in so many ways; but also, that it could be so much better.

- Mihir Bose is the author of *Dreaming The Impossible: The Battle to Create A Non-Racial Sports World*

- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***
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Illustration: Deena So'Oteh/The Guardian

[Opinion](#)[Artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#)

Imagine your child calling for money. Except it's not them – it's an AI scam

[James Wise](#)

Fraudsters are being given more sophisticated ways to trick us into believing they are someone they are not

Fri 30 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 02.27 EDT

This year, I was sent a link to a video of myself, passionately explaining why I had invested into a new technology company. In the video I spoke enthusiastically about the great faith I had in the company's leadership and encouraged others to try the service out. The problem was, I had never met the company nor used its product.

It looked and sounded like me, right down to the fading Mancunian accent. But it wasn't. It was an AI-generated fake used in a business pitch and

designed to wow me into investing in a company. Far from impressing me, it left me concerned about the myriad ways these new tools could be used for fraudulent purposes.

From data breaches to phishing attacks, where fraudsters trick people into sharing passwords or sending money to an unknown account, cybercrime is already one of the most commonly experienced and pernicious forms of crime in the UK. In 2022, the UK had the [highest number](#) of cybercrime victims per million internet users in the world. In part we are victims of our own digital success. Britons have been fast to adopt new technologies such as online shopping and mobile banking, activities that cybercriminals are keen to exploit. As AI becomes more sophisticated, these criminals are being given even more ways to trick us into believing they are someone they are not.

Many of the impressive advancements in human imitation are being developed on our doorstep. The company ElevenLabs has built and released a tool that can almost perfectly replicate any accent, in any language. You can go on its website and have its pre-trained models read out statements using the fast-talking New Yorker “Sam” or the more mellow, midwestern tones of “Bella”.

The London-based company Synthesia goes further. Its technology allows customers to create new sales people. You can generate a photorealistic video of a synthetically generated person speaking in any language, pitching your product or providing customer support. These videos are incredibly lifelike, but the person doesn’t exist.

ElevenLabs make the rules about use, and misuse, of their technology very clear. They explicitly state that “you cannot clone a voice for abusive purposes such as fraud, discrimination, hate speech or for any form of online abuse”. But less ethical companies are launching similar products at pace as well.

It is rather ironic that imitating humans, for good or ill, is one of the first major uses of AI. Alan Turing, the godfather of modern computing, created the [Turing test](#), which he originally called the “imitation game”, to assess an

AI's ability to fool a human into thinking it was real. Passing this test quickly became a benchmark for an AI developer's success. Now that anyone can create synthetic people with a click of a button, we need an anti-Turing test to establish who is real and what is generated.

How will you now know, when you get a video call from your teenage child asking for emergency gap-year funds, that it is really them? How should you respond to an agitated voicemail that sounds like it's from your boss demanding you wire the company funds, when you can no longer be sure it is really them? These questions are no longer hypotheticals.

Fortunately, some services exist already to tackle this challenge. Just as quickly as [ChatGPT](#) was adopted by canny students to complete their homework, AI-detection tools such as Originality.ai were released to tell teachers the likelihood that an essay was in fact written by AI. Similar solutions are in development to assess whether a video is real, relying on pixel-level mistakes that still give away even the most sophisticated AI tools.

And new initiatives are being launched. Synthesia is among many members of the [Content Authenticity Initiative](#), which was started in 2019 to provide users with more insight into where the content they receive comes from, and how it was created. More controversially, but perhaps inevitably, a national form of digital identity – a way of verifying whether you are talking to a real person or a bot – will almost certainly be required if you want to separate your mate from a fake.

In the interim, much greater efforts need to be made to increase public awareness of the increasing sophistication of cybercriminals, and just what is now possible. While we wait for governments to act and regulation to be drawn up, there is the much more immediate risk of a thousand AI tricksters exacerbating Britain's existing cyber-fraud problem.

- James Wise is a partner at the venture capital firm Balderton, and a trustee of the thinktank Demos
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‘The most heartbreaking fact is that so often these missing pupils are the young people who most desperately want to be in the classroom learning.’

Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

[OpinionSchool attendance and absence](#)

**If you think absent pupils are skiving,
just try spending a day in a school**

[Nadeine Asbali](#)



Children are struggling, resources are being cut and teachers are burning out. Yet politicians blame everyone but themselves

Fri 30 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 12.53 EDT

Like most things, schools have never really recovered from the pandemic. Whether it's student attainment, [teachers leaving the profession](#) or the attention span and behaviour of pupils, school life for many is harder than it has ever been. But absence is one area of particular and growing concern, as schools up and down the country attempt to reach the so-called ghost children: the thousands who never returned to the classroom after lockdown.

The worries about student absence that we teachers share with each other were confirmed this week by an alarming [new report](#). It reveals that on an average day this year, one in 10 GCSE pupils in England have been absent from school – a rise of 70% since before the pandemic. According to the investigation, one in 20 year 11 students have missed at least half of their classes this year and around one in 100 are only attending school on an authorised part-time basis.

There will be those who deliberately misconstrue these facts as evidence of a wave of [wokeness spreading across schools](#), allowing children to go part-time owing to nothing but run-of-the-mill teenage mood swings. But spend even a day as a teacher (particularly in a state school in a deprived area where underfunding and poverty compound every issue) and you'll see the truth: the causes of this national absence problem are complicated, ranging from declining mental health to the cost of living crisis, government policy and societal shifts.

On the one hand, we have the undeniable fact that our world has changed since the pandemic began. Hybrid and home working are here to stay. In fact, [a third of UK workers](#) report that they would quit a job if asked to return to the office full-time. But if we can accept that the convenience, comfort and safety of being able to work from home is a legitimate lifestyle choice for adults, why are we so unable to acknowledge that the same might be true of teenagers who are navigating the extra challenges of puberty and growing up in an increasingly complex world?

Admittedly, I wouldn't advocate for full-time remote schooling for most children in the UK. Enough parents have flashbacks of trying to home-school children through lockdowns, and children need the social development of interacting with peers. But for some young people – those with sensitive mental health needs, those dealing with particularly challenging life circumstances or those who are neurodiverse and may thrive in the familiarity and routine of home – the pandemic offered an alternative vision of how their life could look, and then we whipped it from under their feet.

Many parents cite the chronic underfunding of [children's mental health services](#) as a key reason their child is unable or unwilling to return to the classroom. For these parents, keeping their child at home isn't about educational indifference but rather doing everything they can to keep their child safe with no government support, years-long waiting lists and the prospect of [a third of referrals](#) being denied help anyway.

But it's not all about seeing home as a safe haven. I know from working in one of the most deprived areas in the country that many young people are forced to miss school by the harsh realities of life in a [cost of living crisis](#) –

and as rates of child destitution and in-work poverty soar, it's difficult to see this problem diminishing any time soon.

No correct school shoes. No clean uniform. Having to look after younger siblings because of unsustainable childcare fees or parental illness. Homelessness or housing instability. Being unable to afford basic hygiene products such as sanitary towels or shampoo. Taking on a job to help with the bills. Attending benefits or immigration meetings to translate for parents. These are all real reasons children are forced to miss school – and the most heartbreaking and frustrating fact is that so often these are the young people who most desperately want to be in the classroom learning.

Let us not forget: these factors are not naturally occurring. They have not sprung out of thin air. These are the direct result of a deliberate, state-manufactured hostile environment for certain sections of society and the culmination of more than a decade of austerity that has decimated the support that the most vulnerable communities need. These young people are not skiving off school to have a crafty smoke. They are forced into adulthood by a government that has cut every single thing that could help them to get to school in the morning.

But it is politically expedient for a Conservative party with a penchant for cutting vital services to lay blame at the feet of schools and parents. This government seems to expect teachers to plug the gap and become specialist child psychologists (at the same time as getting kids through their maths and English GCSEs), while doubling down on its commitment to fine and even prosecute parents for their children's persistent absence.

I have never known of a school that doesn't go the extra mile to make sure students are in school, and this is almost always done through the (unpaid) extra labour of teachers and pastoral staff, or by using up the school's own budget. Whether it's paying home visits to the houses of at-risk children and so-called "school refusers" to get them to their exams on time, dispensing resources to make sure key learning isn't missed at home, or providing free meals for students who aren't technically eligible in an effort to entice them in to improve their attendance, schools and teachers are already doing everything we can. And we're doing it in the face of a cost of living crisis and a staff attrition problem of unprecedented scale.

But schools can't do it all. And if our politicians are truly concerned about pupil absence levels, it's time they themselves were a little less absent in addressing the problem.

- Nadeine Asbali is a secondary school teacher in London

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/30/absent-pupils-skiving-school-children-cuts-teachers-quitting>

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Labour MP and women's rights campaigner Jess Phillips appears on the TV show Peston on 25 May 2022. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/Rex/Shutterstock

[Opinion#MeToo movement](#)

#MeToo has got men quaking in the corridors of power. That's something to celebrate

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Toppling the mightiest abusers matters – it tells schoolchildren that our culture will no longer condone sexual aggression

Thu 29 Jun 2023 12.44 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

Another one bites the dust. Daniel Korski, favourite to be selected as Tory candidate for London mayor, has [withdrawn from the race](#) after an allegation of groping. He denies it, while his accuser, Daisy Goodwin, a screenwriter and producer, says other women have contacted her with some “very interesting stories” about him. #MeToo appears to have struck again.

Men in apparently unassailable positions of power have been toppled in a quite extraordinary sequence of scandals. Masters of the universe everywhere must be trembling at what might emerge about all they have done, taking it for granted that women at work were there to be touched, or subject to “banter”, all with an unspoken shadow of threats to careers.

Junior women have taken great risks to unmask bosses who can command their future. Those women usually experience a torrent of online and mainstream abuse for their bravery, with vicious accusations from “you brought it on yourself” to “gold-digger”. I look on, deeply impressed at their

courage, as each new feminist wave pushes forward frontiers beyond what my generation dared.

With friends of my age, we look back on what we should never have tolerated when I started out, in the fabled revolutionary year of 1968. We were the original snowflakes, who wouldn't have contemplated going to an editor with tales of molesting or harassment. Such tales would probably have been greeted with astonished incomprehension, probably even ridicule. Sisterly solidarity was confined to warning one another, not urging each other to publicly complain.

Yet plainly some women still think this behaviour is more or less OK, or even normal. Writing in the Mail about the Korski case, [Sarah Vine claimed](#) that a fellow guest once manhandled her breasts at a No 10 party, "reaching out, grabbing them in both hands and sort of jiggling them around with a vigorous enthusiasm that, I must confess, rather took me and everyone else by surprise". Her response? "I wasn't particularly upset – after all, he did it in full view of everyone, so it wasn't threatening or sinister. But it did rather take the wind out of my sails. In the end, I decided to file it under 'someone having a bit of fun at my expense'."

On Korski, she was forgiving: "If Korski did what Goodwin alleges, then he made a stupid mistake. But should that be the end of him? Unless concrete evidence emerges of more incidents in a similar vein, no. There is not yet, nor do I hope there will ever be, a law against flirting, larking around – or simply just being a damn fool." (You might wonder if she'd be so forgiving of a Labour politician.) More to the point, that "boys will be boys" attitude has run its course. Behind every unwanted grope is a men-in-charge worldview that lets every little boy or girl know their rightful place.

[#MeToo](#) has been a bold surge forward. As with any campaign, it's vital that we trumpet the successes, even while acknowledging the Himalayas still left to climb. It kicked off with Harvey Weinstein, emperor of Miramax, receiving a 23-year sentence for [rape](#), [sexual assault](#) and [sexual abuse](#) he committed, unchecked, over a period of 30 years (he received an additional [16-year sentence](#) this February). After all those years of silence, 80 women, many of whom had been gagged by non-disclosure agreements (NDAs),

came forward with accusations after the remarkable bravery of his PA, [Zelda Perkins](#).

Later came the fall of [Jeffrey Epstein](#). This month's remarkable Icarus is [Crispin Odey](#), a hedge funder holding \$4.4bn in assets, after [a dogged investigation](#) unearthed stories from 13 women in an "[abusive workplace](#)". The accusations against Odey, a big-time Brexit funder, were shockingly graphic. His fund collapsed in days as investors fled. The fund's executive committee had tried before to rein him in; he [fired them](#).

And who would expect a handful of brave junior women could cause the mighty CBI to all but implode under accusations of sexual harassment? Initial reporting led to a cascade of more than a dozen women coming forward with accounts, [including rape](#). What finally brought Boris Johnson down was his cavalier promotion of Chris Pincher, ignoring the warnings of sexual misconduct against him. Other sectors, including the media, have also been shaken by such cases. "Pestminster" scandals continue to multiply, as MP [David Warburton](#) resigns after being suspended over allegations of sexual harassment.

These are only a few examples of the #MeToo earthquake that has set thousands of senior men shaking in their big boots. This widespread fear is the campaign's deep success, the sign of a culture that is beginning to shift. Finally, the abuse of women, whether sexist banter or violent rape, is threatening the great citadels of power.

Upon departing the Commons, Warburton, who denies harassment, acidly claimed that #MeToo had "[swung too far](#)". The backlash is of course ferocious, as ever. When I spoke to [Jess Phillips](#), Labour MP and women's rights campaigner, she was coming out of a meeting with Weinstein's denouncer, Perkins. They had discussed the campaign against the NDAs that gagged Perkins for 25 years, and still silence abused women. So far, one province in Canada has banned them, and Ireland is heading the same way. The freedom of speech bill here has a Labour amendment barring universities from using NDAs to silence victims. But she says, of parliament: "People will still be elected next time who think they can get away with abusing this power imbalance in the workplace."

Are we nearly there yet? Some things are getting worse, says Laura Bates, whose [Everyday Sexism](#) site has collected a quarter of a million stories of abuse and harassment. She lists its successes, from cultural influence to “catharsis, hope and solidarity for hundreds of thousands of survivors”. Yet she recounts little sign of schools tackling sexual assaults.

About two-thirds of girls in the UK have reported experiencing [unwanted sexual attention, including touching](#), in public places and [thousands of cases of sexual assault](#) have recently been reported in schools. Yet teachers are still not given adequate training about how to counter the extreme brand of Andrew Tate-influenced misogyny that spreads online, and sex education is under attack from the right. Meanwhile in workplaces the women who are most defenceless are those on zero-hour and precarious contracts.

There is an Everest to climb still, but what happens at the top ricochets all the way down to the school classroom. Toppling the mightiest abusers matters. The feminist revolution is barely half made. But we should celebrate each ratchet upwards by every new wave of women.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).

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2023.06.30 - Around the world

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Lorie Smith, a Christian graphic artist and website designer in Colorado, right, accompanied by her lawyer, Kristen Waggoner of the Alliance Defending Freedom, second from left, speaks outside the supreme court in Washington, in December 2022. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

[US supreme court](#)

Key document may be fake in LGBTQ+ rights case before US supreme court

Christian website designer says she received email request from same-sex couple but ‘author’ says he did not send it – and is not gay

[Sam Levine](#) in New York

Thu 29 Jun 2023 18.21 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 03.56 EDT

The veracity of a key document in a major LGBTQ+ rights case before the [US supreme court](#) has come under question, raising the possibility that important evidence cited in it might be wrong or even falsified.

The supreme court is expected to issue a ruling on Friday in [303 Creative LLC v Elenis](#), which deals with a challenge to a Colorado law prohibiting public-serving businesses from discriminating against gay people as well as any statements announcing such a policy.

The suit centers on Lorie Smith, a website designer who does not want to provide her services for gay weddings because of her religious objections.

In 2016, she says, a gay man named Stewart requested her services for help with his upcoming wedding. “We are getting married early next year and would love some design work done for our invites, placenames etc. We might also stretch to a website,” reads a message he apparently sent her through her website.

In court filings, her lawyers produced a copy of the inquiry.

But Stewart, who requested his last name be withheld for privacy, said in an interview with the Guardian that he never sent the message, even though it correctly lists his email address and telephone number. He has also been happily married to a woman for the last 15 years, he said. The news was first reported by [the New Republic](#).

In fact, until he received a call this week from a reporter from the magazine, Stewart said he had no idea he was somehow tied up in a case that had made it to the supreme court.

“I can confirm I did not contact 303 Creative about a website,” he said. “It’s fraudulent insomuch as someone is pretending to be me and looking to marry someone called Mike. That’s not me.

“What’s most concerning to me is that this is kind of like the one main piece of evidence that’s been part of this case for the last six-plus years and it’s false,” he added. “Nobody’s checked it. Anybody can pick up the phone, write an email, send a text, to verify whether that was correct information.”

Stewart said he had no idea how his name wound up in the request. He said he is a designer with a fairly sizable following online. The inquiry to Smith

sent in 2016 lists his personal website, where he used to have his email and telephone number displayed, so it's possible a stranger could have collected those to impersonate him.

The existence of an actual request to create service is significant in the case because it helps establish that Smith has suffered some kind of harm and has standing to bring the suit. Last year, lawyers for Colorado urged the justices not to take the case because Smith had not received a request to make a website for a gay couple.

Lawrence Pacheco, a spokesman for Colorado's attorney general, Philip Weiser, declined to comment on the possibility that the query might be falsified. He pointed out that the attorney general's office had raised questions about the query in its brief to the supreme court.

"The Company did not respond to that online form. Nor did the Company take any steps to verify that a genuine prospective customer submitted the form," [lawyers wrote](#).

The Alliance Defending Freedom, the well-funded conservative group that has targeted LGBTQ+ rights in recent years, said in a statement to the Guardian that Smith "had no reason to believe the request to celebrate a same-sex wedding submitted to her website wasn't a true request".

"And she knew Colorado could punish her for even communicating that was a message she couldn't express, so – as with all wedding requests – she did not respond," the group said.

The revelation of a falsified request may not matter much in a strictly legal sense, said Jenny Pizer, the chief legal officer at Lambda Legal, a group that protects LGBTQ+ rights. The court has signaled recently that potential liability is enough to support a legal challenge, she said.

"The bigger impact might well be on the public's view of the claims by self-identified Christian business owners who claim they are victims of religious persecution when they are expected to follow the same non-discrimination laws that apply equally to all business owners," she said. "This sort of

revelation tends to reinforce to many people that the fundamentalist Christian victim narrative is without foundation.”

The inquiry from Stewart seems to have appeared at a suspicious point in the litigation, the New Republic noted.

The query was sent on 21 September 2016, a day after the Alliance Defending Freedom filed the lawsuit on Smith’s behalf. In the fall of 2016, Smith’s attorneys originally said that she did not need an actual request for services to challenge the law. But months later, in February of 2017, it referenced the request. Smith [signed an affidavit](#) saying she received the message.

In a statement to the Guardian, the Alliance Defending Freedom described the Colorado law as “unconstitutional censorship” and said “[Smith] filed a pre-enforcement lawsuit, a hallmark of civil rights litigation, because no one should have to wait to be punished before challenging an unjust law.”

US district judge Marcia Kreiger [dismissed portions](#) of the case in September 2017 and referenced the inquiry. “Assuming that it indicates a market for Plaintiffs’ services, it is not clear that Stewart and Mike are a same-sex couple (as such names can be used by members of both sexes) and it does not explicitly request website services, without which there can be no refusal by Plaintiffs,” she wrote.

ADF attacked that reasoning – pointing to the request from Stewart and Mike – [in a press release](#). The US court of appeals for the 10th circuit also did not rule in Smith’s favor before her case arrived at the supreme court.



Demonstrators protest Florida's 'don't say gay' bill, which a group that the ADF helped fund had a part in shaping. Photograph: Wilfredo Lee/AP

[The far right](#)

Revealed: Christian legal non-profit funds US anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-abortion organizations

Alliance Defending Freedom distributes hundreds of thousands of dollars to fringe groups attacking trans, gay and abortion rights

[Adam Gabbatt](#)

[@adamgabbatt](#)

Fri 30 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 11.41 EDT

A rightwing Christian “hate group” which is behind a host of legal efforts to roll back abortion rights, remove LGBTQ+ protections and demonize trans people has seen a huge increase in its funding and has funneled some of that

money to a slew of smaller anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-abortion groups across the US, the Guardian can reveal.

[The Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF), a registered non-profit behind the ongoing [303 Creative supreme court case](#) which could chip away at LGBTQ+ rights, saw its revenue surge by more than \$25m between 2020 and 2021, a period in which a rightwing obsession with transgender rights and sexual orientation saw almost 200 anti-LGBTQ+ bills [introduced](#) in states around the US.

The surge in funding to the ADF, which has been termed an “anti-LGBTQ hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center, saw it record revenue of \$104.5m in 2021, according to filings with the Internal Revenue Service.

It has handed over hundreds of thousands of dollars of that newfound wealth to fringe organizations which have sought to diminish the rights of trans students in schools and the right for trans people to participate in sports, an investigation by the watchdog group [Accountable.US](#) has found.

The ADF, which was founded in 1994 by a group of “leaders in the Christian community”, according to its website, has also given money to groups involved in efforts to ban books which address LGBTQ+ topics, and to organizations which seek to ban abortion.

It comes as Republican politicians and commentators continue to wage a culture war in the US. In June the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the country’s largest LGBTQ+ advocacy group, [declared](#) a “state of emergency” for LGBTQ+ people in the US, citing “an unprecedented and dangerous spike in anti-LGBTQ+ legislative assaults sweeping state houses this year”.

An [HRC report](#) this month found that 75 anti-LGBTQ+ bills were signed into law in the first five months of 2023 – more than double the entire amount passed in 2022.

“Alliance Defending Freedom is a recognized anti-LGBTQ hate group working to build a movement of far-right legal groups to force a dangerous, unpopular agenda on Americans,” said Kyle Herrig, president of

[Accountable.US](#), a progressive organization which researches the finances and activities of special interest groups.

The Alliance Defending Freedom's goal is to strip Americans of their rights and undermine democracy

Kyle Herrig of Accountable.US

“From ADF's involvement with a supreme court case contesting critical LGBTQ rights to the hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding ADF has granted to anti-democratic organizations, ADF's goal is to strip Americans of their rights and undermine democracy.”

The ADF's most high-profile current case is the lawsuit [303 Creative, Inc v Elenis](#), which the supreme court decided on Friday.

The plaintiff, 303 Creative, is a website design company. 303 Creative has never made wedding websites, but its owner, Lorie Smith, claimed her first amendment rights were infringed because, if she were to start making wedding websites, she would not want to make them for same-sex couples – which would violate Colorado's anti-discrimination laws. The court found in 303's favor.

The ADF's rightwing advocacy extends further, however, as the organization has donated to more than a dozen anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-abortion groups.

Accountable.US found that the ADF donated \$85,000 to the Child and Parental Rights Campaign, a group which, according to a Politico report, helped Florida Republicans shape the state's so-called [“don't say gay” law](#), which prohibits discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in schools.

The group has also sued two school districts in Florida over issues relating to the rights of trans youth. One case saw the Child and Parental Rights Campaign sue the Leon county school district, complaining that teachers had allowed a child to choose their preferred pronouns. The case was [dismissed](#) by a judge in January.

The Women's Liberation Front (WLF), a group which previously campaigned against the Obama administration providing protections for transgender students in schools, received \$50,000 from the ADF the same year.

A self-described “radical feminist” organization, the WLF has been called an “anti-trans hate group” [by Glaad](#), an LGBTQ+ advocacy group, and appears to have developed [a specific focus](#) on restricting trans children's access to sports.

The WLF has partnered with rightwing organizations as it has attempted, and sometimes succeeded, to restrict trans people's rights in the US. Members of the group have [testified](#) in support of legislation which restricts transgender treatments for youth in South Dakota, and have criticized Biden's executive orders on gender identity.

Another beneficiary of the ADF's largesse was the Kriegshauser Ney Law Group, which in 2022 [brought a lawsuit](#), with the ADF, on behalf of a Kansas teacher who refused to use transgender or non-binary students' preferred pronouns. The Geary county school district [settled](#) with the teacher for \$95,000.

The Ethics and Public Policy Center, which filed an amicus brief supporting the ADF in the 303 Creative case, received \$78,000. Leonard Leo, an [influential rightwing activist](#) who helped Donald Trump select three supreme court justices, serves as a director for the group, which has also supported a case which [challenges FDA approval](#) of the abortion pill mifepristone.

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“Alliance Defending Freedom and groups like it have grown thanks to a dark influence network of far-right funders,” Herrig said.

“In order to rein in these extremist groups, the key conservative players making up this network must be exposed for what they’re really doing: pushing an anti-democratic agenda to make sure they personally benefit.”

Groups like this will burn bright for a time like this, but when demography catches up we will see them fizzle out

Justin Unga of the Human Rights Campaign

The ADF’s work comes amid a wave of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and rightwing demonization of trans people. Over 220 bills which “specifically target transgender and non-binary people” were introduced in the first four and a half months of 2023, the Human Rights Campaign [found](#), with Florida, North Dakota, Tennessee and Texas showing a particular relish for legislation which would affect trans rights.

At the national level, trans people are also under attack from the right. As the Republican presidential primary gears up, opposition to LGBTQ rights – and trans rights in particular – has become something of a litmus test for candidates, as they seek to win over a far-right GOP base.

“Alliance Defending Freedom is among the largest and most effective legal advocacy organizations dedicated to protecting the religious freedom and free speech rights of all Americans. Our record includes 14 supreme court victories since 2011 and over 400 victories protecting the free speech rights of students on college campuses,” said Jeremy Tedesco, senior vice-president of corporate engagement at the ADF.

Justin Unga, vice-president of strategic initiatives at the Human Rights Campaign, described the ADF as “one of the most dangerous elements in the

anti-LGBTQ+ cause”, but said the group’s influence would not last forever.

In 2022, the Pew Research Center [found](#) that only 64% of Americans identified as Christian, down from 90% 50 years prior, and predicted that the number of Christians in the US would fall below 50% in the next 40 years.

The number of Americans who identify as LGBTQ+, meanwhile, is “surging dramatically, and will be an impact in future elections”, Unga said.

“[Groups like the ADF] will burn bright for a time like this, but when public opinion catches up, when demography catches up, we will see them fizzle out,” he said.

In the meantime, Unga said the Human Rights Campaign and other groups are engaged in efforts to highlight politicians’ record on LGBTQ+ rights, and to turn out the vote in key areas.

“All elected officials are still beholden to their constituents and the people they serve, the people who elect them,” Unga said.

“We’ve identified over 60 million what we call ‘equality voters’: voters who are motivated by issues of equality. They are people who pay attention to whether or not the candidate or elected official votes to advance protections for LGBTQ+ folks or votes to oppose them.”

He added: “We will turn our voters out in support of our candidates and we intend to do that at every level of government from state legislatures to the White House.”

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People line up to speak during a reparations taskforce meeting in San Francisco in April 2022. Photograph: Janie Har/AP

[California](#)

California's first-in-nation reparations taskforce releases final report

The 1,100-page document details examples of discrimination and recommends how to address the harms of chattel slavery

[Abené Clayton](#) in Los Angeles

Thu 29 Jun 2023 16.48 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Jun 2023 10.00 EDT

California's first-in-the-nation reparations taskforce released its final report with recommendations for how the state should atone for its history of racial violence and discrimination against Black residents on Thursday.

This document, which could serve as a national model for how governments can attempt to right the wrongs of the past, marks the end of a nearly three-

year effort that began in the wake of George Floyd's murder and the ensuing reckoning around systemic racism and anti-Blackness in the US.

The [nearly-1,100-page](#) document includes detailed examples of historical discrimination against Black Californians that have persisted for more than a century and affect nearly all areas of life. The taskforce recommended that the state legislature make a formal apology to Black residents for “the atrocities committed by California state actors who promoted, facilitated, enforced, and permitted the institution of chattel slavery ... incidents of slavery that form the systemic structures of discrimination”, the report reads.

The report suggests more than 100 ways to repair the harm, including paying descendants of enslaved people for having suffered under racist actions such as over-policing and housing discrimination.

“This book of truth will be a legacy, will be a testament to the full story,” said Lisa Holder, a civil rights attorney and taskforce member. “Anyone who says that we are colorblind, that we have solved the problem of anti-Black ... racism, I challenge you to read this document.”

This report weighs 400 years pic.twitter.com/T97T9oDXvj

— Isaac G. Bryan (@ib2_real) [June 29, 2023](#)

To reach these demands, taskforce members had to distill input from hundreds of experts and deliberate on who exactly would qualify for reparations and which areas of society, like housing and education, were the most pressing to address. Over more than two years, the nine-person team of civil rights leaders, attorneys, lawmakers and academics held 15 public meetings to gather information and hear expert testimony about California's history of discrimination.

Though California became a free state in 1850, 15 years before the emancipation proclamation was signed, it did not enact any laws to guarantee freedom for all. For over a decade, the state supreme court enforced the federal Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed for the capture and return of runaway enslaved people. In the decades after slavery was

abolished, Black Californians experienced redlining, discriminatory housing practices and segregation in schools.

The reparations taskforce in June 2022 released a 500-page report that detailed 170 years of state-sanctioned discrimination and described “segregation, racial terror [and] harmful racist neglect” inflicted on Black people across the US and in California. “Atrocities in nearly every sector of civil society have inflicted harms, which cascade over a lifetime and compound over generations, resulting in the current wealth gap between Black and white Americans,” the report concluded.

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Since California codified its taskforce at the end of September 2020, cities including San Francisco, Boston and Detroit have established their own committees to explore what atoning for injustices suffered by Black Americans could look like. And while California was the first state to form an official committee, the effort is part of a broader [decades-long collective](#) campaign by racial justice activists and scholars to get the US to not only acknowledge historic harms but put money behind righting wrongs.

Fervor around reparations has swelled to unprecedented levels since 2020. There is no universally agreed upon standard for what reparations for Black Americans should look like. Actions from direct cash payments to returning

[land to Black families](#) are all being pursued in various capacities across the nation.

California's taskforce also recommended that state legislators create a new agency, akin to the freedmen's bureau, which was established in 1865 to support formerly enslaved Black Americans. In this present context, the new agency would handle the implementation of the reparations plan, oversee direct payments and determine the eligibility of those seeking reparations.

Thursday's meeting coincided with the [US supreme court striking down affirmative action](#) in higher education, programs that have [disproportionately helped Black students](#). The ruling will not affect public colleges or universities in California because its voters eliminated state and local government affirmative action in 1996.

Taskforce members said their suggestions will pass legal muster because the benefits suggested would only go [to descendants of enslaved people, not to all Black residents](#).

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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The Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. Victims of the atomic bomb in Japan are angry at an agreement linking it with a memorial in Pearl Harbour. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AP

[Japan](#)

Hiroshima bomb survivors say peace park agreement with Pearl Harbor is an ‘insult’

Several groups wrote to the Hiroshima city government asking it not to sign the agreement with US counterparts

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Fri 30 Jun 2023 01.36 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 11.15 EDT

Survivors of the atomic bombing of [Hiroshima](#) have reacted angrily to an agreement that links the city’s peace park with a memorial in Pearl Harbor.

The sister-park agreement, signed this week by the US ambassador to [Japan](#), Rahm Emanuel, and the mayor of Hiroshima, Kazumi Matsui, is designed to

promote peace and friendship between the former Pacific war enemies.

“Nobody can go to Pearl Harbor, and nobody can go to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial and enter the front door, walk out the exit door and be the same person,” Emanuel said at a signing ceremony at the US Embassy in Tokyo.

“I think the hope here is that we inspire people from all over the United States and all over [Japan](#) to visit Hiroshima Peace Memorial and to visit Pearl Harbor so they can learn the spirit of reconciliation.”

The Hiroshima peace park and the Pearl Harbor National Memorial of Hawaii will promote exchanges and share experiences of restoring historic structures and landscapes, as well as youth education and tourism, media reports said.

“The sister arrangement between the two parks related to the beginning and end of the war will be a proof that mankind, despite making the mistake of waging a war, can come to its senses, reconcile and pursue peace,” Matsui said.

But representatives of [hibakusha](#) – survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – condemned the agreement as inappropriate, arguing that while the Pearl Harbor attack targeted a naval base, the bombing of Hiroshima indiscriminately killed large numbers of civilians.

Haruko Moritaki, an A-bomb victim and adviser to the Hiroshima Association for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, said the agreement was an “insult” to survivors. “The historical backgrounds of the two parks will forever be different,” she told the Chugoku Shimbun newspaper.

Several groups wrote to the Hiroshima city government asking Matsui not to sign the agreement, saying the two wartime attacks were “not something we should forgive each other for,” according to the Nikkei Asia paper. “They are historic lessons to learn from and never repeat.”

Kunihiko Sakuma, chairman of the Hiroshima Prefectural Confederation of A-bomb Sufferers Organisations, said that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima

had been unnecessary. “It did not end the war and save the lives of American soldiers, as the US claims,” he told the Nikkei. “It was clear that Japan was going to lose. Unless that fundamental issue is addressed, we can’t just focus on the future.”

More than 2,300 US service personnel were killed in Japan’s surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 – an event that brought America into the Pacific war.

About 80,000 people died instantly in the Hiroshima bombing on 6 August 1945, with the death toll rising to 140,000 by the end of the year. Another 70,000 people died in Nagasaki on 9 August, six days before Japan surrendered.

Emanuel said he was aware of the objections raised by hibakusha groups. “I understand anguish and angst is an emotion, but I don’t think you should be trapped by that,” he said, adding that reconciliation between the US and Japan “is the example of what I think this world desperately needs right now”.

The two sites have been associated with reconciliation since Barack Obama became the first sitting US president to [visit](#) Hiroshima, in May 2016. The then Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, made a [reciprocal visit](#) to Pearl Harbor in December same year.

In a statement to mark the sister-park agreement, Obama said his and Abe’s visits had been the “key steps in deepening the alliance between our two nations,” and described the Hiroshima-Pearl Harbor agreement as “another historic accomplishment”.

“By connecting our two peoples to our shared past, we can build a shared future grounded in peace and cooperation,” Obama said.

Shigeru Mori, a hibakusha who met Obama in Hiroshima, said he welcomed the agreement. “Pearl Harbor is a painful place for Americans to remember the war,” he said, according to the Chugoku Shimbun. “I want Japan and the US to join hands and do their best to work for peace.”

Associated Press contributed reporting

This article was amended on 30 June 2023 to correct the spelling of Pearl Harbor in the headline.

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Medical staff help a woman at Bangkok's Don Mueang airport in Thailand. She had to have her leg amputated after getting stuck in a moving walkway. Photograph: Don Mueang airport/Facebook

[Thailand](#)

Woman's leg amputated at Bangkok airport after getting stuck in moving walkway

Airport expresses 'deepest condolences' after 57-year-old gets caught and has left leg removed from above the knee

Associated Press

Fri 30 Jun 2023 01.57 EDT

A woman's leg has been amputated in a Thai airport after it became trapped by a movable walkway on Thursday, officials said.

The 57-year-old Thai passenger was due to board a morning flight from Bangkok's Don Mueang airport to Nakhon Si Thammarat province when she was caught by the walkway in Terminal 2. A medical team there eventually had to remove her left leg from above the knee, according to the airport's officials.

“On behalf of the Don Mueang international airport, I'd like to express my deepest condolences regarding the accident,” airport director Karun Thanakuljeerapat told a news conference. “I'd like to insist that we will ensure that no such accident will happen again.”

He said the airport would be fully responsible for the woman's medical costs and would be open for negotiations regarding other compensation.

The medical team at the hospital informed Karun that they could not reattach her leg, but the woman requested to be transferred to another hospital to assess the possibility, he said.

Images shared online showed the lower part of the woman's leg trapped beneath the belt at the end of the walkway as she was assisted by airport staff. A suitcase lying near her was missing two wheels, and the yellow comb-like plates were seen broken off from where they typically cover the edge of the belt where the moving walkway ends.

Karun said the suitcase wheels were found underneath the belt, but it was unclear how it might relate to the accident. He said walkways at the airport were checked daily, with an additional monthly inspection. He said the walkway had been closed and a team of engineers was inspecting it to determine the cause of the incident.

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France riots live: teargas fired in Marseille as 45,000 more police deployed across country – as it happened

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France protests: more than 1,300 arrested as riots surge in Marseille and Lyon

Fourth night of demonstrations sees 45,000 police deployed as authorities claim the situation is calmer

- [French riots – latest updates](#)

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#) and agencies

Sat 1 Jul 2023 06.35 EDTFirst published on Sat 1 Jul 2023 00.30 EDT

More than 1,300 people were arrested in a fourth night of violence in [France](#) after the police shooting of a 17-year-old boy.

[Forty-five thousand police officers](#), including special forces, were deployed to respond to rioting across the country on Friday night, with the situation in two big cities – Marseille and Lyon – highlighted as particularly chaotic, with buildings and vehicles torched and stores looted.

The ministry of the interior reported that 1,311 people were arrested overnight, while 79 police officers and gendarmes were injured and 2,500 fires were recorded.

The unrest flared nationwide after [Nahel M, a 17-year-old of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was shot by police](#) on Tuesday during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb. His death, caught on video, has [reignited longstanding complaints of police violence and racism](#).

The 38-year-old officer involved in the shooting, who has said he fired the shot because he feared he and his colleague or someone else could be hit by the car, has been charged with voluntary homicide and placed in provisional detention.

The funeral ceremony for Nahel began on Saturday with a visitation, and will be followed by a mosque ceremony and burial in a cemetery in Nanterre.

The ministry said the protests were “of a lower intensity compared with the previous night”.

“It’s the republic that will win, not the rioters,” France’s interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, said as he met police in the early hours of Saturday morning. He denounced the “unacceptable violence in Lyon and Marseille”, where public demonstrations were banned and public transport halted.

There more than 400 arrests in the capital, with reports of burnt rubbish and violent scuffles in the Les Halles district.

More than 80 arrests were made in Marseille, according to the interior ministry, and “significant reinforcements” were sent after the mayor, Benoît Payan, called on the national government to immediately send additional troops.



Smoke rises from a bonfire near graffiti reading 'The police kill' during clashes with police in Lyon. Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

"The scenes of pillaging and violence are unacceptable," Payan tweeted late on Friday, after police clashed with protesters.

Local media reported that an Aldi was the target of a looting ram-raid, while authorities said they were investigating the cause of an apparent explosion in the city, which they did not believe caused any casualties.

Several rifles were looted from a gun store, but no ammunition was taken. One person was arrested with a rifle that was probably from the store, police said.

In Lyon and its surrounding suburbs, rioters set cars ablaze and aimed fireworks at police. Police deployed armoured personnel carriers and a helicopter to quell the unrest in France's third-largest city.



Firefighters extinguish a bus burned during clashes between protesters and riot police in Nanterre, near Paris. Photograph: Mohammed Badra/EPA

Nanterre's mayor, Patrick Jarry, said: "There's a feeling of injustice in many residents' minds, whether it's about school achievement, getting a job, access to culture, housing and other life issues ... I believe we are in that moment when we need to face the urgency [of the situation]."

Speaking in Mantes-la-Jolie, Darmanin highlighted the young age of many of those taking part in demonstrations.

"I do not confuse the few hundred, the few thousand delinquents, often very young unfortunately, with the vast majority of our compatriots who live in working-class neighbourhoods, who want to work and educate their children," he said.

The French football team urged an end to the violence on Friday night.

"The time of violence must give way to that of mourning, dialogue and reconstruction," the team said in a statement posted on social media by their captain, Kylian Mbappé.



Police officers pass by a looted shop as they patrol in Lyon. Photograph: Jeff Pachoud/AFP/Getty Images

The team said they were “shocked by the brutal death of young Nahel” but asked that violence give way to “other peaceful and constructive ways of expressing oneself”.

The French president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), left an EU summit in Brussels early on Friday to attend a crisis meeting. He urged parents to keep their children at home and accused social media companies of playing a “considerable role”, saying violence was being organised online. He asked platforms such as Snapchat and TikTok to remove sensitive content.

Macron is under mounting pressure from rightwing parties to declare a state of emergency, which would give authorities extra powers to ban demonstrations and limit free movement.

Asked on Friday night whether the government could declare a state of emergency, Darmanin said: “We’re not ruling out any hypothesis and we’ll see after tonight what the president of the republic chooses.”

Darmanin said on Saturday he was cautious about such an order, which “has been called four times in 60 years”.

Analysts said the government was desperate to avoid a repeat of 2005, when a state of emergency was declared after the death of [two boys of African origin](#) in a police chase sparked three weeks of rioting.

Reuters contributed to this report

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Protesters clash with riot police in Marseille on Friday. Photograph: Christophe Simon/AFP/Getty Images

[UK news](#)

British holidaymakers warned of risk of disruption from French riots

Foreign Office updates travel advice for France, saying location and timing of clashes is unpredictable

[Miranda Bryant](#)

Sat 1 Jul 2023 04.20 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 07.38 EDT

British holidaymakers travelling to France have been warned they could face disruption after [four nights of unrest](#) in reaction to the police killing of a 17-year-old boy of Algerian and Moroccan descent.

The Foreign Office has changed its travel advice, warning of the potential for disruption to travel, curfews and that the “location and timing of riots are unpredictable”.

“Since 27 June, riots have taken place across France. Many have turned violent. Shops, public buildings and parked cars have been targeted. There may be disruptions to road travel and local transport provision may be reduced,” the updated advice [said](#).

“Some local authorities may impose curfews. Locations and timing of riots are unpredictable. You should monitor the media, avoid areas where riots are taking place, check the latest advice with operators when travelling and follow the advice of the authorities.”

The teenager, identified as Nahel M, was shot by police on Tuesday during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb, in an incident that was captured on video. It was the third fatal shooting by police during traffic stops in [France](#) this year.

Since then, protests have spread rapidly across the country amid longstanding complaints of police violence and racism. The president, Emmanuel Macron, is yet to declare a state of emergency, but on Friday the interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, ordered a nationwide night-time shutdown of all public buses and trams.

Across the country, 45,000 police officers were deployed on Friday as rioting continued for a fourth night, including in Marseille and Lyon. A total of 994 people were arrested and 2,560 fires on public roads were recorded.

The British government said French authorities had banned a rally by groups opposed to the Iranian government scheduled to take place on Saturday in Paris due to security risks but that connected events could still go ahead, including in the suburb of Auvers-sur-Oise.

“A demonstration by the same group in Paris in June 2018 was the target of an attempted bomb attack,” it said. “British nationals should reconsider any plans to attend such meetings, and if you do, be aware of your surroundings at all times, and move away quickly from disturbances.”

It also advised that it was “more important than ever to get travel insurance and check it provides sufficient cover”.

Each year, millions of Britons visit France, especially in the summer months when it is a popular holiday destination.

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A monument to French rage: buses torched in riots over police killing

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- ['Am I still any good? Have I still got it?' PJ Harvey on doubt, desire and deepest, darkest Dorset](#)
- [Blind date 'She said that her friends found me online before our date'](#)
- [Celebrity, secrets and lies Ireland watches as scandal engulfs RTÉ](#)

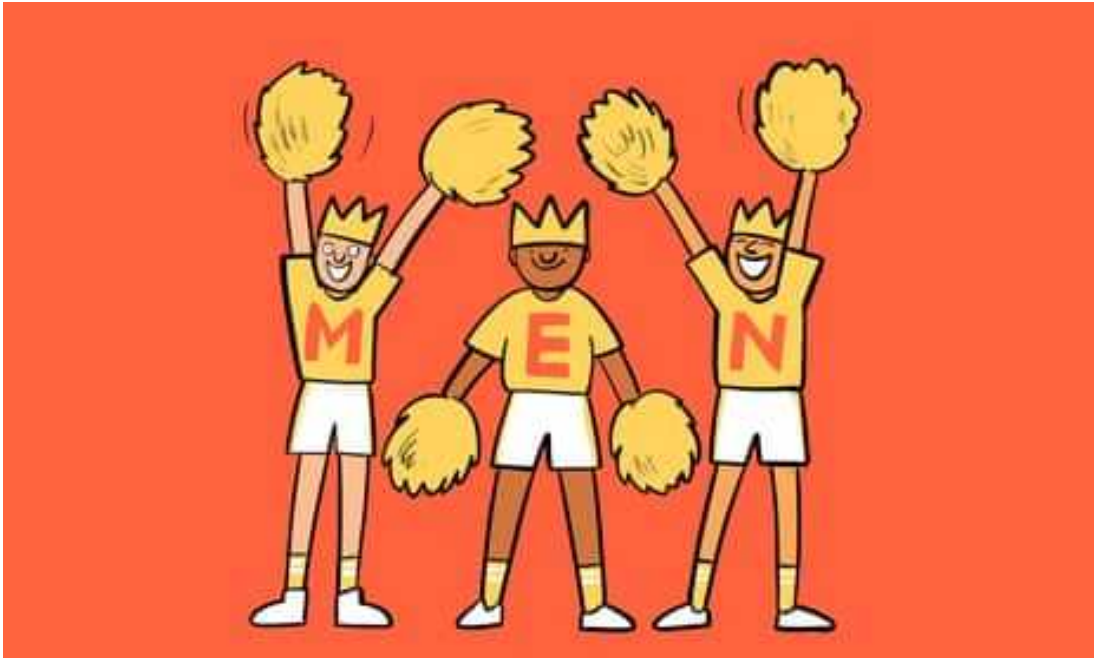


Illustration: Mark Long/The Guardian

[Men](#)

Caitlin Moran: what's gone wrong for men – and the thing that can fix them

The feminist author has spent years writing about how to be a woman. Now she's turning her eye on the opposite sex

[Caitlin Moran](#)

Sat 1 Jul 2023 05.00 EDT

It was the response I got on social media that made me think I'd stumbled on to something bigger than I initially thought. On Twitter a few years ago, I asked what I thought was a pretty simple question: "Men – lovely men of Twitter. Hello! The last 10 years of feminism means we're always discussing the problems of women on here. But what are the problems of men? What do you find makes your man-life difficult?"

The responses flooded in. “Paternity leave, if you can get it, is much shorter than maternity leave.” “We have very few avenues to emotionally express ourselves. We’re supposed to fit this stereotype of being tough, and only wanting to touch if it comes with sex. But I want a hug and head pats, dammit!” “Father’s Day is so depressing. All the cards depicting golf, or whisky. I’m an acid house survivor who owns two chickens called Bez and Barry Mooncult. Society seems not to think I might have reproduced.” “Suicide is still the [biggest cause of death for men under 50](#) [in the UK] – and yet we seem not to have a plan to address that.” “In hot weather, your balls can get so hot and sweaty they stick to the side of your thighs, like clammy bats in a cave.”

But one type of reply came up time and time again. “Is this a trick?” “Are you asking this so you can laugh at us?” “Is this a feminist trap – are you going to retweet all of these, with the reply, ‘Look at the men complaining about nothing – while women continue to endure all the true suffering?’” Boys, and men, have become so used to being the conversational whipping boy, and the punchline to jokes, that they could not believe that a feminist writer was genuinely asking them to talk about their problems.

And, looking at the replies – which kept coming for days; in the end, I got more than 3,000, and the response was picked up in news pieces across the world – I started to feel an unexpected emotion: guilt. Tremendous guilt. Because while not a “classic”, Viz’s Millie Tant-style, man-hating feminist, I have certainly said, “Ugh, men” a lot. I have, I admit, said, “Typical straight white man” on a number of occasions. I have, now I come to think of it, allowed myself to talk about men with the same level of unkind, brisk, “Stop moaning, you silly arse – your problems are marginal at best” tone that, well ... we used to adopt when women talked about their problems.

The conversations I had confirmed how bleakly some young men see this new feminist world they’ve been raised in

I think my presumption – as a 48-year-old, fourth-wave feminist – was that straight white men were generally doing so fine that they were the one sociodemographic group you could lovingly ... beat up on a bit. For people

of my generation, and older, a wry attitude of, “Ugh, men!” seems like a long-awaited rebalancing of centuries of straight white male cultural dominance. This world of Michelle Obama, [female Ghostbusters](#), [lady Doctor Whos](#), [Taylor Swift](#), [Jacinda Ardern](#), feminist clubs at school, books like 100 Bad-Ass Women from History, features headlined “50 Women Who Are Changing the World”, and 13-year-old girls proudly wearing vagina-based merchandise from Etsy is so recent, it still feels like a mild, and quite marginal, corrective.

So what is the problem here? Well, it comes down to what the world looks like to teenage boys, whose entire lives have happened post [Amy Schumer](#), [#MeToo](#) and the “[The future is female!](#)” slogan. “It feels like boys are losing,” my then teenage brother, Andrew, said to me, back in 2018. “I feel like feminism has gone too far now. Everything’s about women, isn’t it? And their problems. But, in the 21st century, I think it’s harder to be a young man than a young woman. What about men?”

And so, after a decade of writing about women and feminism, my new book *What About Men?* jumps over the gender fence – carefully; I’m wearing quite a short skirt, and don’t want to flash my knickers at passing truckers, even if they wouldn’t mind if I did – to write about boys and men. And the first conversations I had confirmed just how bleakly some young men see this new feminist world they’ve been raised in.



Caitlin Moran. Photograph: Dave Hogan/Hogan Media Ltd/ Shutterstock

“I’ve got some stats for you,” said one young middle-class boy, whom I would previously have guessed – mainly due to his Sonic Youth T-shirt – would have been a dyed-in-the-wool, leftwing feminist. He had quite long hair, and everything. “Boys underachieve at school, compared with girls. Boys are more likely to be excluded from school. Boys are less likely to go into further education. Boys are more likely to be prescribed medication for ADHD/disruptive behaviour. Boys are more likely to become addicted: to drugs, alcohol, pornography. Men make up the majority of gang members. Men are the majority of the homeless. [Men make up the majority of suicides](#). Men make up the majority of people who are murdered. Men make up the majority of the prison population. Men are the majority of the unemployed. Men are the majority of those who die at work. Men are the majority of those who die in wars. Men are the majority of those who lose custody of their children in divorce cases.”

He rocked back in his chair, waiting for my reply.

At the time, I didn’t know this was the first conversation I was having about the crisis in men. It was, ironically, International Women’s Day, and I was Zooming with a group of teenage boys and girls about, ostensibly, feminism – until it got derailed by these fairly inarguable statistics about boys, and

men. I admit: it caught me on the hop a bit. So on the hop, in fact, that after saying, “Thank you for talking about the problems of boys, and men. I have a lot to think about here!”, I ended the call five minutes later.

As soon as I logged off, I got multiple texts from all the girls who’d been on the conversation, too.

“He was just being polite with you! You have no idea how he talks when he’s with his female classmates! Men have problems, yes – but on WhatsApp, he calls feminism ‘a cancer’, and feminists, ‘Feminazis’!” “He and his friends all make rape jokes – they say it’s banter, but it’s clearly never occurred to them that they know women who have been raped!” “You don’t know how boys talk when you’re not around. They blame it all on women. Why aren’t all the mums talking about this?”

Like almost any other progressive, feminist woman with a public platform, around half of my ‘job’ is doing Unpaid Feminism

The mums are talking about this, of course. Later in the book, I talk to a mother who is bewildered as to why her 15-year-old nephew – “who used to be so lovely!” – was now, along with thousands of other teenage boys, a massive fan of [Andrew Tate](#). He – the nephew, not Tate (although, to be fair, by proxy, also Tate) – had “ruined Christmas lunch” by quoting Tate, and then making Tate’s “hand signal, which basically means, ‘Shut up, woman’, whenever my niece was talking. She eventually burst into tears, and went to bed. Before pudding!”

“I don’t understand!” this woman continued. “His parents are so nice! They read the Guardian! I don’t understand why they have a son like this!”

I paused. I did know why.

“Well, it’s because they’re lovely, leftwing, Guardian-reading people,” I replied, eventually. “Do they ever say things like, ‘Typical men!’ or, ‘Ugh, toxic patriarchy!’?”

My friend thought.

“Of course,” she said. “They live in Hackney.”

“Well, that’s why,” I said. “If he’s grown up hearing that straight white men are awful – if he’s been made to feel shame, and guilt, simply because of who he is – then of course he’s going to be attracted to the man who says, ‘Don’t be ashamed! Men are great! We need men! Fuck woke-dom!’ That’s a classic piece of dumb teenage rebellion against your parents. He needs a male role model who thinks men are awesome, because his job right now is ‘becoming a man’ – and Tate is currently the loudest voice shouting, ‘I can show you how.’”

Although I researched dozens of other topics – body image; the boringness of most men’s clothing; how male genitalia works like a classic movie duo, with “Cock” as the leading man, and “Balls” the adorable comedy sidekick; pornography; fatherhood; midlife crises; old age – time and again, I came back to male role models in popular culture.

Both celebrities and fictional characters in books, TV and movies, essentially work as an Argos catalogue for young people to work out who they want to be. That old saying, “I cannot be what I cannot see”, has been wheeled out a million times when discussing female role models, resulting in effective, organised campaigns to show young girls role models in politics, Stem, business, music, sport and space. But for young men and boys? I started to realise that the problem for them had begun in my own generation – their parents. Their mums and dads. Us.

Like almost any other progressive, feminist woman with a public platform, around half of my “job” is doing Unpaid Feminism: retweeting reports, and petitions; doing talks; mentoring young women; responding to news stories or legislation that concerns women.

I don’t know of a single woman my age who hasn’t engaged with, say, the pro-abortion campaign in Ireland, the outpouring of women’s fear post [Sarah Everard](#), the body positivity movement, menopause or the lack of pain relief for gynaecological procedures. This is what we do. It feels normal, useful and, ultimately, positive.

Into this vacuum created by the progressive left: the advent of Andrew Tate, Jordan B Peterson, and the ‘incel’ movement

The men of my age, however? When I look at my roughly equivalent male peers – progressive, leftwing, liberal men with public platforms – there is no such culture when it comes to the issues that concern men and boys. There is no semi-organised, progressive movement that habitually raises, and then campaigns in support of, solutions for male problems: educational underachievement and exclusion; sky-high mental ill-health and suicide rates; porn-influenced strangulation; fatherhood being seen as the “lesser” parenting role; and the epidemic of loneliness in older men ([nearly a third of men say they have no close friends](#).) There is no sense of these all being folded in together, under the subject “How things needs to change for boys, and men” in the way they have in feminism. And into this vacuum created by the progressive left: the advent of Tate, [Jordan B Peterson](#) and the “[incel](#)” movement.

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When I started interviewing men my age about their lives, and asking why they didn’t talk about these things in public, a certain batch of sentiments came up repeatedly. “Men talking about their problems is boring.” “I don’t

want to make a fuss.” “I don’t want to be accused of having Emotional Man Flu.”

Which is why the difference between where women and men currently are in “talking about their problems” is vast. Women are newly fascinated with being absolutely, viscerally honest about all the problems to do with being a woman: Schumer will do 10 minutes on her vagina “[smelling like a small farmyard animal](#)”, while [Lily Allen](#) will perform under balloons that read “[Lily Allen has a baggy pussy](#)”. Women just do not give a shit these days, in the best way possible. Breaking a taboo, or being visceral, is now a very viable career path that inspires both relief and love from your fans.

But can you imagine a male comedian talking about a funky-smelling penis? Or a male pop star admitting to having a small, or average-sized, penis? It seems incredible to me that, as yet, there is not one famous man in the world who has admitted to having a small, or even average-sized, penis: [even though 68% of men’s cocks are between three or four inches](#), on the flop. That means approximately two-thirds of Ocean’s Eleven have lovely, yet modest, wangers, and at least two of the Beatles were packing mere, delightful hand luggage.

And yet, confessing this seems unthinkable. We have yet to see the advent of the Average-Penis-Size Jesus, who will break this taboo, and discuss it, in a way that brings progress and relief to all. Indeed, we are still so medieval about penis size that we see male genitalia as being inimical to a man’s soul. Remember when Stormy Daniels told the world that Donald Trump’s penis was “[smaller than average – a dick like the mushroom character in Mario Kart](#)”?

And we were all like: “Yes, it makes sense the horrible man has a small, weird mushroom penis.” The whole world joined in on that one.

In this climate, then, how is a teenage boy to think if he has a resolutely average penis? Or one that looks like any of the characters from Mario Kart? While his sister will be having conversations about how “proud” she is of her “magic” vagina – honestly, you cannot move for “My amazing fanny” chat on the bus these days – there are literally no joyful, affirming

conversations going on, where older male comedians/writers/pop stars are encouraging teenage boys to feel proud of their penises.

I'm aware that even though I've explained why that is both damaging, and unfair, that sentence still looks ... a lot. Possibly mad. But then, talking about how incredible your minge is seemed equally unthinkable and mad in, say, 1997, so we know these things can change.

How can we make a world where boys find a new space and language to talk about their bodies in the same, joyful, honest, affirming way? Because the existence of dick pics alone tells us: young men do want to start a conversation about their penises. It's just, so far, this is the best idea they've come up with (granted, it *is* a bad idea).

Feminism. What men and boys need is feminism. And what women need is boys and men who use feminism. Feminism is still the only thing we've invented that exists solely to look at the problems of gender, and bring about equality between the sexes.

Until now, feminism has worked on making women equal to men in power, safety, status, politics, relationships and the economy. But it now urgently needs to embark on the second phase – which was absolutely predicted by the word “equality”.

For men are not equal to women in numerous things: 1) Their ability to talk about their problems – instead, men have “banter”, which slaps LOL Artex over crumbling emotional walls. 2) Women have “The Sisterhood” – which knows it should, even though sometimes it doesn't, spring into collective action whenever an issue is raised. 3) Women have thinktanks and charities and hashtags – they organise the fuck out of International Women's Day, while International Men's Day still gets less attention than International Steak and a Blowjob Day. 4) According to need, men are not equal in services for mental health, as that terrible suicide rate still shows. 5) I have never seen a single discussion about how to prevent boys being excluded from schools, kept out of gangs, kept out of jail, prevented from becoming addicted to pornography, or becoming homeless, that has received even half the traction that women and girls can get for doing “No Makeup Monday”.

And this last one is pivotal: because it's so much easier for women and girls to show love and support for each other than men. Men do not have an equivalent of the "*Yass, Kween!*" or the "dancing girl" emoji, or "*Watch my girl go!*", that women get when they post something brave, honest and bold about her life. And this is one of the major stumbling blocks men need to address if they want to enjoy the kind of change and liberation that they seem, at root, to be jealous of in modern women.

Wives, mothers, daughters, friends need to tell men: 'Your problems aren't boring'

I suggest this lack of public support is down to the still dolorous fear of homophobia: boys supporting other boys with the wild love that girls give each other risks a "*Do you fancy him, then?*" or, sadly, "*You bender*".

Unexpectedly, one of the biggest problems for straight men is homophobia. You can't form an effective brotherhood if a large section of the cohort won't share a political bunkbed with its gay brothers.

Being honest, breaking taboos, starting conversations, organising campaigns, forming alliances and supporting each other. These are the basic feminist tools women have used to improve their lives immeasurably in the last hundred years. Two – possibly three – generations of men have watched as their wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and friends have changed what our idea of "being a woman" is, in the most joyous, amusing and liberating way possible.

Now those wives, mothers, sisters, daughters and friends need to tell men: "Your problems aren't boring. It's OK to make a fuss. We won't accuse you of Emotional Man Flu. We love you and we worry about you. Please use these tools we have invented to solve your problems now.

"But don't leave them all over the kitchen once you've finished with them – The Girls are coming round at 6pm to do each other's roots, and I don't want to spend the first 10 minutes Ajax-ing my worktops and tutting."

What About Men? by Caitlin Moran will be published by Ebury on 6 July at £22. To support the Guardian and Observer, buy your copy from guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply. [Moran will be discussing her book at venues across the UK from 3-26 July.](#)

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[Interview](#)

‘Am I still any good? Have I still got it?’: PJ Harvey on doubt, desire and

deepest, darkest Dorset

[Laura Snapes](#)

She is the only person to have won the Mercury prize twice and is beloved by fans for her constant reinvention. In a rare interview, the musician talks about her wild new album – and what it tells us about the woman behind the myth



Sat 1 Jul 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 03.25 EDT

Star power is a rare thing in music today, stripped away by social media overexposure and a heritage industry that trades on former glories. But [PJ Harvey](#) has an otherworldly air as she walks into a restaurant at the Barbican in London for one of her first interviews about her music in more than a decade. A thunderstorm has broken the June heatwave, and Harvey, 53, had to shelter under a ledge to keep dry on her way here. Still, Harvey looks pristine in a black vest and tiny black leather shorts, her famous dark hair in soft, shoulder-length curls, a fine gold chain bearing two rings around her neck.

This is Polly Jean Harvey off-duty. As a [musician and performer](#), PJ Harvey rivals David Bowie for reinvention. Her fans can plot the moment they fell for her by era-specific archetypes and sounds: was it the austere bun of her

debut, 1992's *Dry*? Or perhaps the lurid leopard print of 1993's *Rid of Me*? For me, it was the white suit, red lipstick and gleeful strut of *This Is Love* from 2000's Mercury prize-winning *Stories From the City, Stories From the Sea*, leering out of MTV2 and suddenly making pop music look wan.

For 30 years, Harvey's only constant has been her dogged refusal to repeat herself. She set the bar high from day one: she was a budding art student from a farm in rural Dorset, but with her ribald, violent songs about sex and subjugation, the issue of *where she had come from* felt like another matter entirely. Harvey's brawny early 90s albums satirised femininity as a burdensome form of drag (though she refused associations with the burgeoning feminist punk scene) and were intended, she said then, "to humiliate myself and make the listener feel uncomfortable". Annie Clark, AKA St Vincent, tells me she found salvation in Harvey's refusal of dogma. "She said: I am an artist, not a mouthpiece for whatever mercurial musings, sympathy Olympics, cause du jour. She rejected your moral purity for her own ritual obliteration."

Nor could anyone have guessed then where she was going – Harvey's 2011 album *Let England Shake* saw her acclaimed as a stately war laureate, making nerve-jangling rock from first world war history. It made Harvey the only double Mercury prize winner. In between came haunted trip-hop, petulant punk and spectral balladry. Pinning down Harvey's own story on those records was a tall order: she's always defied autobiographical readings, yet none of her music could have been made by anyone else.

I don't feel I'm a natural musician. I have to really work at it

She opens the window. When we order tea and the waiter apologises that she only has triple-mint, not bog-standard peppermint, I suggest throwing a strop, and discover that Harvey is quick to laugh. Her posture is immaculate. She never gesticulates: the emotion is all given (and later withheld) in her striking features. "That looks like a nice recorder," she says of my dictaphone. Harvey used one just like it to capture some of the field recordings on her new, beguilingly strange 10th album, *I Inside the Old Year Dying*, where sounds like demob-happy kids and fizzing power lines are

twisted around her pastoral post-punk and heretical hymns. Others came from sound designers she met while making music for theatre. She asked one “for really specific noises, and he had every single one of them!” she enthuses, her Dorset accent worn and comforting. Like what? “Like: ‘Can I have wind blowing through a barbed wire fence in November?’ And he’d go, ‘Yeah, here you are!’”

You get the impression she would rather talk about things like this all day. She has grown more enigmatic over the past decade, producing more music for theatre and TV than solo albums; her once-ferocious gigs became precisely choreographed. She is so private that the tiniest scrap of information becomes outsized: she tells me that she loved *The White Lotus*, hasn’t finished *Succession* yet, adores soundtracks, and, surprisingly, calls Ricky Gervais a favourite comedian (he just makes her laugh).

I Inside ... is Harvey’s latest pivot – an intimate musical setting of 12 poems from her acclaimed [2022 collection Orlam](#). (Poetry Foundation called it “accomplished and allusive”.) Set in the Dorset woods, it chronicles the year in which her heroine, Ira-Abel, loses her innocence as childhood slips away and the pressures and perils of girlhood intensify. Harvey wrote the poems in an old Dorset dialect that she remembered from her youth (“drisk” is mist; “twanketen”, melancholy; “scratching”, writing). On *I Inside ...* she sings in it, too, in startling, uncanny tones: sometimes naive and girlish, other times sharp and bitter.



Playing at Irving Plaza in New York City, 1992. Photograph: Ebet Roberts/Redferns

It might be Harvey's slipperiest record, one she describes as a "sonic netherworld". It sounds like a sort of timeless folk music, I suggest. "I definitely hoped that I could sort of be in every era and no era all at the same time," says Harvey, pleased by the idea. Given her allergy to repetition, it seems surprising that she revisited Orlam in a different medium. As she's got older, she explains, "I've stopped trying to compartmentalise what I do." Songs, poems, drawings used to be kept separate. "But now I'm quite comfortable letting them all blur into one."

Harvey didn't intend to make a new album: it crept up on her during her daily piano and guitar practice. "I don't feel I'm a natural musician," she says. "I have to really work at it." Sometimes she recited other people's songs – Nina Simone, the Stranglers – but sometimes she just needed words for a new melody. While writing Orlam, "I'd grab at a poem because it was the easiest thing I had to hand."

During the pandemic, she took the sketches to her oldest collaborators, musician John Parish and producer Flood. Harvey and Parish started collaborating when she joined his band, Automatic Dlamini, aged 18. "She started giving me tapes of really early songs, and I saw straight away she

had a brilliant voice,” Parish recalls. “I asked her to join as soon as she left school.” Flood first produced [1995’s lethal To Bring You My Love](#), blown away by a demo that others had warned him was “a bit out there”, he says.

Harvey wanted a marriage of manmade and natural sounds. “It was always a bit homemade, and I love that,” she says, beaming. “To get some of those sounds, it really was like four hands each doing different things to ancient equipment that might break at any time. It felt very human and very of the moment.” But they were still prepared to junk everything if it didn’t meet their high standards. It was the eternal challenge, says Harvey: avoiding repetition. “None of us are interested in treading over the same ground, and the more you’ve worked together, the harder that is,” she says. “The more songs I’ve written, it’s harder to write songs because I so often start something and think, well, mm, that’s a bit like that song I wrote in 1996.”

Harvey was also determined to avoid what they called her “PJ Harvey voice”. It echoes a scribble in the liner notes to 2004’s barbed, beautiful *Uh Huh Her*, in which she questioned: “too PJ H?” (As a teenager, I couldn’t imagine how anything could be “*too* PJ H”.) Harvey describes it as “a particular way of projecting my voice – even down to that. Flood would stop me straight away if he heard me singing in a way I’d sung before, and help me find emotional ways to access a different voice.” (Flood insists he wouldn’t dare: “I might get the withering eyebrow.”)

Doesn’t trying not to sound like PJ Harvey ever lead to an identity crisis? “It does,” she admits. “I definitely go through times where I wonder if I still have the ability to write the songs I dream of writing. Am I still any good? Have I still got it? But I’ll keep having a go. And usually, if I persevere, I can get there.” Sometimes it feels like “climbing uphill through mud”, even in pursuit of songs she knows aren’t good enough. “In some ways, I’d be a bit scared if I lost that doubt because then I would maybe feel a bit too comfortable, and not really be able to see clearly what I’m doing any more.”

The creation of Harvey’s previous album, [The Hope Six Demolition Project](#), was an uphill slog through mud. Having reflected on historic atrocities with *Let England Shake*, *The Hope Six* focused on modern foreign and domestic policy. Harvey’s reportage-style lyrics drew from research trips to Kosovo,

Afghanistan and Washington DC. She offered unprecedented access into its creation, setting up a studio in Somerset House in London for the public to watch her record through one-way glass, and also published an accompanying poetry book, [The Hollow of the Hand](#). Yet she never talked about the intentions behind these works. “I wanted to leave everything that I had to say within the lyrics, and not have to put them inside some sort of framework,” she says now.



‘I always felt a bit sad that I missed out on going on to further learning.’
Photograph: Steve Gullick

Harvey was accused of poverty tourism, with DC councillors vociferously criticising one song for portraying a deprived neighbourhood as “drug town, just zombies”. (“PJ Harvey is to music what Piers Morgan is to cable news,” said one.) It’s easily Harvey’s least beloved record but – she says, becoming terse – she “didn’t pay too much attention to the response”. She doesn’t read reviews because she doesn’t find it healthy (she once said reading all her early press contributed to a period of mental ill health). “Bottom line,” she says, “I know how I feel about it.” Did the politicians’ comments make her question her intentions? No. “Everyone’s entitled to a different opinion.”

But on a gruelling year-long tour for the album, Harvey developed a different kind of dissatisfaction. “I was very tired, then remembered how

tired I'd been writing," she says, warming again. She was in her late 40s, "a natural time of questioning: is this still what I want to be doing?" Sometimes, during the shows, "I felt as though I was watching myself from a distance 'performing' my work, trying to unravel who and what I was at that moment in my life." After the tour, she took time off, even stopping her daily practising. Her enthusiasm was revived by being asked to do soundtracks by theatre director Ian Rickson, and TV showrunners Sharon Horgan and Shane Meadows. "That was a way I could really enjoy music without it having to become a Polly Harvey album."

Poetry was another salvation. Harvey began a formal mentorship with the [Scottish poet Don Paterson](#). Their first lesson was at her house. "I was so excited and nervous, there with my notepad and pen," she remembers. "And Don said, 'Right, I thought today we won't do any theory. We're just going to talk about why you want to write poetry.' That was it!" She gulps with trepidation. Three hours of probing later, she had cast back to herself as a tiny child, writing and drawing under a tree in woods near her house, and was in tears. "I seemed to have been completely regressed to a child of five weeping under a fir tree at the bottom of the garden!"

Paterson told her: write about that. Harvey wasn't sure; The Hollow of the Hand had been a journalistic endeavour. "Don encouraged me to be as bold in my poetry as I am in my songs, which I hadn't done," she says. "I'd felt a bit like I was not worthy to write poetry, so I trod very carefully around it." Poets are her greatest inspiration, she explains later by email. "There seems to be a magic and magnificence in their words that conjure the very meaning of life. To even begin to try and enter that world felt a goal beyond my capability."



PJ Harvey performing with longtime collaborator John Parish in Milan, 2009. Photograph: Morena Brengola/Redferns

Harvey also took poetry courses in London, and claims no one recognised her. “If you’re going about your life like a normal person, people only see what you’re there to do,” she says. She loved being a student “because I always felt a bit sad that I missed out on going on to further learning”. In the early 90s, Harvey turned down studying sculpture at St Martin’s College to pursue music: “I’d often feel what fun that would have been, to have had those three years with a similar age group, finding out who you are. It was a bit like going back to do that study that I’d never done. You’d often be encouraged to share really new writing, which puts you in a vulnerable position, but it’s the same for everyone. That was a beautiful thing.”

Harvey’s fans know how fiercely she rejects autobiographical interpretations of her work. Though she also welcomed the misconceptions as they only made her more elusive – if people want to assume from 1995’s *Down By the Water* that she drowned her daughter, let them. Other records were clearly more personal – she paused the writing of 1998’s *Is This Desire?* when penning one song made her realise that she was unwell and needed to get help – although given the ghoulish 90s coverage of her few spells of mental ill health, you can understand why she’d rather conceal the links between her life and music.

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But there are startling things in common between the protagonist of her new songs and poems and the young Harvey. Both are farm girls who cropped their hair and exclusively befriended boys. Ira-Abel describes herself as a “not-girl, a bogus boy”; as a child, Harvey loathed girlhood, went by the name Paul and peed standing up to fit in. I try to draw what seem like clear lines between them, but Harvey stridently resists. Harvey once said she became shy at 11 – was that a similar loss of innocence? No, she says – besides, she can’t remember saying that and surely everyone goes through it. Did her brother cut her hair, as Ira-Abel’s does? “Like I said, it’s not an autobiographical work,” she says. (Though one associate lets slip that it’s “kind of like an origin story, autobiographical but oblique”, then tells me, “Don’t do me in!”)

I try to widen the conversation to what seem like timely themes in the work, but it proves just as fruitless. Harvey becomes impassive and I start to sweat in her cool gaze. Ira’s frustrations with gender seem resonant with contemporary conversations about identity. Was that on her mind? “No, no.”

I get very affected by things on a daily basis that we hear are happening in the world

Her last three albums all consider the human capacity for cruelty. What keeps bringing her back to that theme? “I wouldn’t say they’re just that,” she says. “There’s also a lot of looking at positivity and love. You can only look at that with the other side. Then that is really an exploration of how it feels to be alive.”

She’s said that she can become grievously upset by current events: is it a strike against terrible things being normalised, or her innate empathy? “I’m naturally like that,” she says. “I get very affected and upset by things on a daily basis that we hear are happening in the world, then feel the need to write about it.” The government plans to house refugees [in a barge off the coast near where Harvey grew up](#). Are there local movements against it? She thinks so. “I think it’s really difficult for everyone in that area for all sorts of different reasons, isn’t it?” Does she have an opinion? “I do, but I’m not going to talk about that,” she says. Defeated by her stonewalling, I move on.

I Inside ... is the latest iteration of Harvey’s need to remove herself from her work. As a younger woman, she achieved it through self-destruction; this album feels as though she’s trying to attain it through transcendence. She doesn’t often listen back to her albums, she says, but calls this one a comfort. “It always makes me feel better.”

A recent lavish reissue campaign of all her albums traces how Polly Jean Harvey became PJ Harvey, though Harvey says the release was just a practical matter: many of her albums were out of print on vinyl. The idea grew to include old demos and rarities. “It’s been a lovely project for me, and for me to have,” she says. “It’s made it much easier to reference things while I’m looking for something.” (I imagine her putting on 2007’s *White Chalk* to confirm her suspicions that yes, she’s used that voice before.)

One of the best parts, I thought, was the archival photos: a goth in hot weather reading Flannery O’Connor; looking uncertain at college; the tender Polaroid of her and lover Nick Cave in a collage she made for him in the mid-90s (last year Cave described them as “each too self-absorbed to ever be able to inhabit the same space in any truly meaningful way”). I wondered how she felt looking at them – who she felt close to, distant from? “I didn’t feel any of those things, no,” she says, perplexed.



With Nick Cave on Channel 4's The White Room in 1996. Photograph: Patrick Ford/Redferns

I ask why she wanted to shock people when she first emerged. She can't remember, then stops me. "If I was to keep asking you what you meant when you wrote *that* line, where were you at, wouldn't you find it a bit odd?" she probes. No, I say – old photos give me enormous nostalgia. I love hearing artists reflect on their career. And I had imagined that doing a retrospective must be poignant. I find myself apologising, flustered. "I'm just curious," she says gently. "I'm not even critical. It does interest me because a lot of people want to know about those things, but I guess I'm just not that type of person."

Harvey lives in the moment, she says. "Not even that far in the future – only in terms of creative ideas I'm slowly growing." Her past selves feel a healthy distance away, though she won't perform some songs from *Dry* any more. She was 17 when she wrote it. "I'm too far away from that as a 53-year-old woman." She's always written from the perspective of various characters – why is this different? "It'd be like you reading from your diary aged 16 and really having to inhabit that now – like on that funny radio programme [Radio 4's *My Teenage Diary*], which I love. It's hilarious. But hilarity is not what we're after." I assume she would never write a memoir. "I wouldn't, really," she says. "I've seen some beautiful films made as

people reach their older years,” she says, mentioning Nina Simone: *La Légende* from 1992. “Maybe when I can see my end in sight, I *maybe, might* do a film,” she says.

Perhaps it’s Harvey’s refusal to look back that imbues her work with a potency which means fans can plot their lives by it. Sharon Horgan recently asked Harvey to score her Bafta-winning [drama series *Bad Sisters*](#). She discovered her when she moved from Ireland to London in the late 90s, initially falling for the “raw, primal” *To Bring You My Love*. “That might have suited where I was at the time, feeling angry,” says Horgan. Soon the slicker *Stories From the City* ... came to define Horgan’s experience. “It’s how she talks about being in love. It felt like you were able to learn a lot about putting your feelings in order when you listen to that album.”

Harvey is happy to have a foot in the past, in some respects. Music consumption has changed a lot even since her previous album. She worries about how music is valued, even by herself. “If I don’t like it after a minute, I might go to something else, and I keep pulling myself back on that: Polly! Just sit and listen!” she says. As a songwriter who emerged decades before streaming, she was “lucky enough to have had a good grounding when things weren’t like that. I’ve been able to grow confidence in my process. But I wonder how it affects the younger generation that is having to write in this new climate?”

She’s been listening to conversations about AI and creativity. “But,” she says with a rhapsodic sigh, “I can’t imagine that the imperfection of the human touch will be outridden by the perfection of a computer. I think there’s something beautiful about imperfections and failings of us as human beings.” She comes back to the making of *I Inside* ... “I believe that people will still want that homemade-ness of it – going full circle to us holding things together with bits of tape to make a sound.”

For one night only on New Year’s Eve 1991, Harvey, Parish and some others formed an Abba tribute band, Fabba. Has she seen Abba Voyage? “I didn’t, but I would be interested to,” she says. “I’ve heard brilliant reports. I think that’s going to become more and more common though, don’t you?” she says of the reanimating technology. “I mean, oh gosh,” she adds, with a

grimace, “the other day I did entertain whether they’re gonna make a PJ Harvey avatar when I’m dead and gone!” She hoots. Maybe they could call it the Pologram, I suggest. Finally, I have found the limit of Harvey’s desire to keep moving forward. “Oh no!” she cries happily, head in hands, “please, no!”

I Inside the Old Year Dying by PJ Harvey is out on 7 July.

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[Blind date](#)[Dating](#)

Blind date: ‘She said that her friends found me online before our date’

Charley, 28, chef, meets Matt, 33, medical adviser

Sat 1 Jul 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 04.59 EDT

Charley on Matt



What were you hoping for?

I went into the date with no expectations. I'm not really looking for anything specific at the moment so I was looking for a fun evening with someone interesting. I was mostly hoping it wouldn't be boring!

First impressions?

Great shirt and instantly friendly.

What did you talk about?

Veganism. Why our past relationships ended. His foray into swing dance.

Most awkward moment?

Nothing really – except a rogue piece of bruschetta that flew off my plate and on to the floor.

Good table manners?

Definitely. It was tapas and he was a good sharer.

Best thing about Matt?

He has interesting opinions on a lot of topics, but was also a good listener.

Q&A**Fancy a blind date?**

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can [read all about how we put it together here](#).

What questions will I be asked?

We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?

No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?

No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?

Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?

Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?

No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?

We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?

Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply

Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Would you introduce Matt to your friends?

Matt seems like the kind of guy you could introduce to anyone.

Describe Matt in three words.

Thoughtful, interesting, mature.

What do you think Matt made of you?

I hope Matt liked me as a friend. We had some interesting conversations but I think he felt the same as me – that chemistry-wise it wasn't quite there.

Did you go on somewhere?

No.

And ... did you kiss?

We didn't. He's a lovely guy but there was definitely more of a friendly vibe than a flirty one.

If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?

I like a bit more banter on a date. Maybe we just have a different sense of humour.

Marks out of 10?

7.

Would you meet again?

Not romantically, but it sounds like he'd be a fun mate on a night out – he

says he's always the first on the dancefloor, and the last to leave.



Matt and Charley on their date

Matt on Charley



What were you hoping for?

To eat good food and break the monotony of using dating apps.

First impressions?

Relaxed, articulate, full of earnest curiosity, and striking green eyes.

What did you talk about?

She said her friends found me online before our date, but she didn't look. How she is yet to experience "wedding season" in her friendship circle, also – Jewish weddings and the hora chair dance. There was a shared enthusiasm for autofiction, Abba Voyage and dancing. She asked why my previous relationships ended.

Most awkward moment?

Honestly, there wasn't one.

Good table manners?

Very. She studied Spanish and helped decipher some items on the menu. And asked me if she had food on her face, which then made me think I must have food on my face.

Best thing about Charley?

Her get-up-and-go attitude.

Would you introduce Charley to your friends?

With great pleasure.

Describe Charley in three words.

Warm, clever, funny.

What do you think Charley made of you?

Hopefully that I made an effort and that we had things in common. She didn't seem in a hurry to leave – we stayed talking until the place closed.

Did you go on somewhere?

No.

And ... did you kiss?

We didn't.

If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?
Better weather.

Marks out of 10?
9.

Would you meet again?

I don't think so, the romantic chemistry wasn't quite there. Also, she's moving to Italy in three months' time.

Charley and Matt ate at [Parrillan](#), London SE1. Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com

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Ryan Tubridy (centre) presenting an edition The Late Late Show. He stepped down from presenting the programme in May. Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA

[Ireland](#)

Celebrity, secrets and lies: Ireland watches as scandal engulfs RTÉ

National broadcaster embroiled in a real-life drama over clandestine payments to its star presenter



[Rory Carroll](#) *Ireland correspondent*

[@rorycarroll72](#)

Sat 1 Jul 2023 00.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 06.00 EDT

It has become Ireland's top-rated show – a tale of celebrity, secrets and lies that has entranced the public and dominated the airwaves. Some reckon it is the most gripping drama ever produced by RTÉ.

Unfortunately for the national broadcaster, it is an all too real scandal over clandestine payments that has engulfed its star presenter and senior managers and planted a question mark over RTÉ's future.

The stakes rose on Friday when the taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, said laws may have been breached. "Some of these payments may have been on the wrong side of the law," he told reporters, capping a calamitous week for the broadcaster.

The story erupted on 22 June when RTÉ [disclosed hidden payments](#) of €345,000 (£295,000) to Ryan Tubridy, who hosted The Late Late Show and a flagship radio programme, in addition to his published salary between 2017 and 2020.

The revelation caused outrage because RTÉ is publicly funded and had given false statements about Tubridy's salary to staff, viewers and the government while it was seeking pay cuts and extra funding. The broadcaster apologised for a betrayal of public trust.

With RTÉ staff staging protests and calling for changes, other high-profile presenters took to the airwaves to reveal their salaries and to deny having any clandestine top-ups.

The director general, Dee Forbes, was suspended last week and subsequently resigned. The legislature's public accounts committee grilled her former colleagues in televised sessions this week that exposed a "slush fund" for corporate hospitality and glaring holes in RTÉ's governance and accountability.

When asked about his salary, Richard Collins, RTÉ's chief financial officer, replied: "I think that's a private matter." Reminded that he was paid with public money, Collins paused, then said: "I don't know what my exact salary is, off the top of my head."

James O'Connor, a Fianna Fáil member of the committee, expressed disbelief. "The chief financial officer of RTÉ can't tell us what he's paid. Are we supposed to buy that?" When pressed, Collins said he believed his salary was "around €200,000 base salary plus a car allowance of €25,000".

Collins said taxpayers may have been "defrauded" over undeclared payments to Tubridy and that he believed some entailed "concealment" or "deception" to bump the presenter's annual salary over €500,000.



RTÉ's interim deputy director general, Adrian Lynch (left), and the chief financial officer, Richard Collins, arriving at Leinster House in Dublin to answer questions about the controversy. Photograph: Brian Lawless/PA

Labour's Alan Kelly said the committee hearings exposed profound dysfunction. "This is an executive that isn't functioning and can't continue. Neither can the board after what we saw."

Executives and board members traded blame, saying they were unaware of the payments. "An act designed to deceive," said the RTÉ chair, Siún Ní Raghallaigh. She said the term "talent" should no longer be used to distinguish presenters and other performers from colleagues. "It implies some have greater worth than others. The first step in culture change is to consign this term to the dustbin."

The drip drip of disclosures – forced in part by robust, forensic reporting by RTÉ journalists – has rotted goodwill towards the broadcaster and undercut its campaign to obtain more funding and overhaul its funding model.

Politicians are keen to question Forbes, who declined to appear at the public affairs committee, citing ill health. They also want to question Tubridy and his agent, Noel Kelly, who funnelled the hidden payments through the

agent's British company. The pair denied wrongdoing and have not detailed how any payments were made.

Tubridy's future is unclear. The scandal has tainted his genial everyman persona, and he has stopped presenting his radio show since the story broke.

On 16 March, a week before RTÉ's bombshell disclosure, Tubridy announced he would step down from [The Late Late Show](#), which he had hosted since 2009. RTÉ's interim deputy director general, Adrian Lynch, said it was possible Tubridy knew of the brewing crisis before his announcement to step down.

Tubridy's successor, the Northern Ireland comedian Patrick Kielty, disclosed he would earn €250,000 for each 30-episode season. Kielty, who lives in London, said that under his contract he could have put travel and accommodation on expenses but had chosen not to. "I genuinely hope this helps clarify things," he said.

[Oliver Callan](#), the stand-in for Tubridy's radio show, joked to listeners that he would allude only sporadically to "the unpleasantness in the basement" and invoked the hashtag #DontMentionTheThing.

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2023.07.01 - Opinion

- The LGBTQ+ community could once rely on Labour as a staunch ally. Not any more
- The event that will decide the next election has already happened – even if Rishi Sunak doesn't know it yet
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‘Keir Starmer criticised Scotland’s gender recognition legislation and ordered his MPs to abstain.’ Protest outside Downing Street against the blocking of the Scottish gender recognition bill, 18 January 2023. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

[OpinionLGBTQ+ rights](#)

The LGBTQ+ community could once rely on Labour as a staunch ally. Not any more

[Owen Jones](#)



The party that abolished Thatcher's hateful section 28 has been pulled into the mire of 'social conservatism'

Fri 30 Jun 2023 12.59 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 13.01 EDT

The love affair is over. Whatever its other failings, Labour could long count on the loyalty of LGBTQ+ voters. This was, after all, the party that abolished [section 28](#). Although it is now hopelessly out of date, Labour's 2004 Gender Recognition Act provided a pathway for trans people to be accepted for who they are. And yet now, in 2023, if Keir Starmer and his frontbenchers were to turn up to a Pride event, they would probably be booed and heckled by some.

That's not to say Labour's relationship with LGBTQ+ people was always easy. When Peter Tatchell stood as the party's candidate in the 1983 Bermondsey byelection, he was subjected to a viciously homophobic campaign – the Liberal party described its candidate as the “straight choice” – and the Labour establishment did little to defend him. When challenged about this alleged witch-hunt, soon-to-be Labour leader Neil Kinnock allegedly declared, “I'm not in favour of witch-hunts, but I do not mistake bloody witches for fairies,” which he later denied, despite [having used “woofers”](#) in another newspaper profile piece.

When the Tories and their media allies were waging war on the gay community in 1987, Kinnock's then press secretary, Patricia Hewitt, [wrote](#): "The 'loony Labour left' is taking its toll; the gay and lesbians issue is costing us dear among the pensioners."

But New Labour showed real courage: when it equalised the age of consent and scrapped section 28, it did so in defiance of [hostile public opinion](#). Yet even though Blairites run the show again, Labour is becoming a toxic brand in the LGBTQ+ world. When Starmer made a campaign video with a church accused of carrying out "exorcisms" on gay people, it could be accepted as a mistake, not least when the [leadership apologised](#). Yet when a Labour MP who has voted against equal marriage publicly [came to the church's defence](#), no action was taken. And when, two years later, the leadership did [yet another campaign video](#) featuring an evangelical Christian belonging to an anti-gay rights organisation, no apology was forthcoming. As one Labour MP put it anonymously: "They have completely lost their way. I don't know who it is in Keir's office, but someone clearly is of the view that the LGBTQ community should be thrown under a bus."

During the 2021 Hartlepool byelection, the party's chosen candidate had been on all-expenses' paid trip to Saudi Arabia – a totalitarian regime that [decapitates gay people](#) – and [cooed that](#), "I've seen a modern, progressive Saudi Arabia that has totally changed my view of this country." And when [frontbencher Lisa Nandy says](#) that "social conservatism" has "never been more important" and is "something that we have to rediscover", LGBTQ+ people understandably read that as supporting attitudes which, at best, are hardly accepting and inclusive.

But it's on trans rights that Labour has descended into the mire. With [transphobic hate crimes soaring](#) and the Tories targeting the trans community as they did gay people in the 1980s, Labour could offer courageous leadership. It has done the opposite. Last year, Scottish Labour joined the overwhelming majority of the Scottish parliament in voting to bring gender recognition laws in line with countries such as Ireland, Norway and Switzerland. But when the Tories voted to overturn Scottish democracy, Starmer [criticised the legislation](#) and ordered his MPs [to abstain](#). He then declared that updating trans rights was "[not a priority](#) for the Labour party".

Then there's Labour MP Rosie Duffield, who has publicly asked for a pause on banning conversion therapy in a [joint letter to the Times](#) and criticised queer men who are [married to women](#) – insulting bisexuals. This week, when a trans woman appeared in an ITV report on the cost of living crisis, Duffield tweeted that she [wasn't a "mother"](#). When Duffield's public intervention resulted in an online firestorm against this trans mother, her employer – the Trades Union Congress – took the unprecedented step of issuing a statement, declaring that its staff member “is being subjected to anti-trans abuse online, because she is a mother. This is unacceptable. Everyone should be safe and respected at work”. And yet Labour has so far not taken action. When approached, Starmer's office said that it was not responding at this stage.

How far the party has fallen. Polling has long shown that LGBTQ+ people overwhelmingly [reject the Tories](#), and many will still vote Labour to eject the government from office. But even many LGBTQ+ people who would otherwise support the political direction of the Labour leadership have lost patience. Labour can no longer call itself a champion of the LGBTQ+ community. And if the party's leadership turns up to Pride events for cynical political reasons, every boo and heckle will be richly deserved.

- Owen Jones is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***



The Bank of England on Thursday 22 June, when interest rates went up to 5%, their highest level for 15 years. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

[OpinionConservatives](#)

The event that will decide the next election has already happened – even if Rishi Sunak doesn't know it yet

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



With inflation and mortgage rates painfully high, the government can no longer rely on votes from its blue wall

Fri 30 Jun 2023 12.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 15.02 EDT

Here's a parlour game for the political geek in your life. When did Tony Blair win the 1997 general election? Don't accept the reflex answer – 1 May of that year – because the one you're looking for is 16 September 1992, Black Wednesday, when interest rates were briefly set to 15% and the [Conservatives](#) trashed their reputation for economic competence.

Now ask when Gordon Brown lost the 2010 election. The correct answer could be 17 September 2007, with the [run on Northern Rock](#) that presaged the financial crash of 2008; or perhaps 6 October 2007, when Brown [ducked an early election](#), allowing his critics to cast the onetime iron chancellor as a bottler. Thatcher's victory in 1979? It didn't come on election day in May, but more probably in January, when the binmen and gravediggers [went on strike](#), thereby providing some of the iconic motifs of the winter of discontent, just as James Callaghan was on the front page of the Sun reported (inaccurately) to be asking: ["Crisis? What crisis?"](#)

You see, hours of fun for all the family – and not wholly pointless either. Because it was Callaghan who in 1979 [mused to an aide](#): “There are times, perhaps once every 30 years, when there is a sea-change in politics. It then does not matter what you say or do. There is a shift in what the public wants and what it approves of.” In those moments, all the noise and toil of an election campaign is so much displacement activity: the public have already made their decision, months or even years earlier.

Of course, we don’t know whether Keir Starmer will win, still less whether we are witnessing the kind of epochal sea-change that Callaghan rightly detected nearly 45 years ago. But if Rishi Sunak’s destiny is to lose the coming contest, when might we say his fate was sealed?

The temptation will be strong – especially for many a Guardian reader – to say that Conservative defeat was guaranteed when the public finally recoiled in revulsion from this government. They might even point to Thursday of this very week, and the striking sight of a BBC Question Time audience, carefully weighted to include more Tory voters than supporters of any other party, in which [not a single hand](#) was raised in support of Sunak’s Rwanda policy. Not one. Perhaps some of those Conservatives were persuaded by the court of appeal’s declaration earlier that day that [the policy was unlawful](#) or maybe they just thought it repellent to transport people seeking asylum, many fleeing trauma and persecution, to a country that the court had decided was not safe.

Others will wonder if Sunak’s [appointment in Samarra](#) was made long before he ever reached Downing Street, thanks to the previous occupant but one. In this view, it was fury at Partygate that irreparably broke the bond of trust between government and people, and which Sunak could not shake. Once voters could see that a Conservative prime minister who had set the rules – ones that required heartbreaking sacrifice – also broke them, and extravagantly so, and then repeatedly lied about it, there was no way back.



‘Today Zac Goldsmith resigned his ministerial post, creating yet more awful headlines for the government.’ Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

Or there might have been, had Sunak been able to convince the electorate that these were the sins of Johnson alone. That would always have been tricky, given that the current prime minister had himself received a fixed-penalty notice for Covid lawbreaking. It would have required a wholesale repudiation of Johnson and all he had done. So perhaps the PM’s political demise was foretold on 19 June this year, the day Sunak [failed even to vote](#) on the Commons privileges committee report into Johnson’s deceptions of parliament – the day Sunak could not bring himself to make the break from a man whose behaviour had disgusted the nation.

As a result, the PM remains haunted by it. On Thursday, the committee hit out at those formerly impassioned defenders of parliamentary sovereignty who, in their devotion to Johnson, had rubbished the panel – created by parliament – as a kangaroo court or witch-hunt. Today one of those named, Zac Goldsmith, [resigned his ministerial post](#), in a scathing exit letter, creating yet more awful headlines for the government.

If the Tories lose, all these events will have played their part – along with Brexit, of course, for which Sunak was such an early enthusiast and which

now [even Nigel Farage admits](#) is a failure. And yet, the answer to the quiz question of the future may be more prosaic.

It may well be 22 June 2023, when the Bank of England raised [interest rates to 5%](#), their highest level for 15 years. For this is where elections are won and lost: in voters' wallets. "Are you better off today than you were four years ago?" [asked Ronald Reagan](#) to devastating effect in 1980. Soon Labour will ask the same question, suitably tweaked, and the answer will be loud and furious.

Every month, people are coming off fixed-rate mortgages only to be charged with vastly increased payments that, for many, are all but unmanageable. It is no use ministers blaming the Bank of England, which sets interest rates and is tasked with managing inflation: Sunak's own five-point plan promises to halve inflation by the end of the year. For voters, this is on him.

And by "voters", I mean specifically those who for generations have been the core of the Conservatives' electoral coalition. Last week, an Ipsos poll found that [87% of homeowners](#) with a mortgage were dissatisfied with the government. There is no blue wall without those people. There are no blue *foundations* without those people.

When Sunak became prime minister last autumn, even non-Conservatives greeted his arrival with a measure of relief. Unlike Liz Truss, at least he had one foot planted on planet Earth and looked as though he knew how to read a balance sheet. That would be his USP: the adult in the room.

But with inflation still so stubbornly high and mortgage rates through the (ever more expensive) roof, Sunak is destroying his own brand. He was meant to be Mr Competence; instead, the interest rate the [government has to pay](#) on its own borrowing is now higher than it was in the crazy, Kwasi days of Kwarteng and Truss. And so he is tarred with their brush, making the Conservatives – Sunak included – once again the party of economic mayhem.

No predictions, but the event that will decide the outcome of the next general election? It's already happened.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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Ella Baron on a new home for Wagner's mutinous troops – cartoon

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‘It could be that Rishi Sunak, who for a while back there was the Conservative party’s idea of a cool person, is merely an out-of-touch plonker.’ Sunak at a Downing Street press conference, 30 June 2023. Photograph: Frank Augstein/PA

[OpinionWater](#)

The tide is coming in fast on Rishi Sunak – and it’s full of sewage

[Marina Hyde](#)



The prime minister's pledges to transform the country look about as rock steady as Thames Water's balance sheets

Fri 30 Jun 2023 09.03 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 13.05 EDT

Another busy week for Britain's Ministry of Metaphor, as the country's largest supplier of that luxury product "water" teeters on the brink of collapse. Thames Water has become [the latest object lesson](#) in the predictable and predicted folly of privatised monopolies, [aided by a regulator](#) that's an even bigger wet wipe than the fatbergs bunging up the sewers. If you thought leveraged debt was bad when the Glazers did it with Manchester United, it's possible you'll find it even worse when water firms are holding you to a [40% bill hike](#) if you simply want one of the essential building blocks of human life to come out of your tap. The companies have acted like cowboy builders who fleece unsuspecting customers for catastrophically poor work, and now want you to pay them huge sums again to fix it.

Back to them in a minute. For now, let's rewind to early January this year, when the prime minister portentously unveiled his government's [five pledges](#). You may recall quite a lot of political experts explaining loftily that he had chosen these specific targets as they were actually not all that hard to

achieve. As Rishi Sunak put it then: “Those are the people’s priorities. We will either have achieved them or not. No tricks, no ambiguity. We’re either delivering for you or we’re not.”

Can I shock you? They’re not. [Inflation is up](#), recession is on the cards (the actual cards, not the pledge card), the Rwanda scheme to stop the small boats has just been [ruled unlawful](#), UK debt-to-GDP ratio has topped 100% for the [first time since 1961](#), and NHS waiting lists are up from [biblical to apocalyptic](#). Amazing, given the gravity of those, that noises-off to the main event continue to be bleatings by the likes of [Jacob Rees-Mogg and Nadine Dorries](#) – the sort of pair you’d expect to turn a corner and find if you were riding your tricycle round [the Overlook Hotel](#) – who have now put five times more effort into greasing up to Boris Johnson than they ever did into public service.

Today, the government had hoped to dominate the agenda with its new “once in a generation” plan to restore the NHS, at least the seventh such plan in a decade, never mind a generation; but who’s counting? However, as I was typing this, Zac Goldsmith [resigned as a minister](#), declaring himself “horrified” that it was impossible to get anything done on the environment any more as Sunak personally was “simply uninterested”, pointing out that the prime minister had chosen to attend Rupert Murdoch’s summer party as opposed to the Paris climate summit.

As for Sunak’s ability to withstand these diurnal derailments, the signs don’t look encouraging. He increasingly resembles not so much a prime minister as a collection of blandishments that fall on the wrong side of the fine line between platitude and twatitude. Sunday saw him address those unable to make mortgage payments with the bizarre advice: “[Hold your nerve](#).” Oh dear.

Perhaps, [like King Cnut](#), Sunak was actually making a philosophical point about the limitations of rulers that would be mockingly misunderstood by lesser intellects for the rest of time. The alternative reading is that Sunak, who for a while back there was the Conservative party’s idea of a cool person, is merely an out-of-touch plonker. It was perhaps not beyond the realms of prediction that the guy who spent Covid press conferences

chirping “thanks PM!” to Boris Johnson would simply graduate to addressing various looming collapses of the public realm with catchphrases such as “I’m on it!”

But is he, in fact, on it? On the repulsive Rwanda scheme, the government [has now spent £120m](#) and counting on a policy that was always doomed. Maybe Rishi’s best hope is explaining that it’s a pisser, but one that’s basically covered by having one person dragged reluctantly into the income tax system. [His wife](#).

For now, it’s hard to conclude that Sunak will succeed in rebooting a government that’s been reset more times than most people’s Gmail passwords. Maybe that’s the problem: too many passcode attempts have left ministers locked out of government. Perhaps somewhere on one of the UK’s otherwise boarded-up high streets is an unofficial shop that unlocks governments, no questions asked. If you know of one, please send its coordinates to Downing Street. Until then, the Sunak administration remains a study in ineffectuality on multiple fronts, leading Goldsmith to cite, not unreasonably, “a kind of paralysis”.

In some ways, the water crisis feels most emblematic of all these systemic failings and their knock-on costs to ordinary people who simply cannot afford them. Perhaps the most ludicrous pose of the entire water company shambles is that adopted by the people in charge of the country. The government is acting like people this is happening *to*, as opposed to *because of*. Yet ignorance of this long-brewing disaster cannot be claimed. In fact, the potential for the precise whirlwind now being reaped was recognised and outlined by the then environment secretary, Michael Gove, in a [trenchant address](#) to the water industry back in 2018. It’s all there – concern over excessive profits, excessive salaries, offshore financial arrangements, prioritisation of dividend payments, and warnings about highly leveraged firms, specifically Thames Water.

Yet what was done? Apparently, nothing. Unfortunately, this was during the long, long period in Britain’s national story when its government was not really able to even have any other policies than getting a Brexit deal done, much less to act on them. It was a time of both political tumult and total stasis, as all the things a government really ought to have been getting on

with were shelved in the cause of frantically shaking the Conservative party in the hope some kind of deal would drop out. Addressing the dangerously mounting issues with the water industry was just one of the casualties.

Pandemic preparation was another, with the Covid inquiry this week hearing more about how massive administrative resources were diverted to [planning for a no-deal Brexit](#), a stopping of work streams that hampered many other civil contingency plans. Still, what's the worst that can happen? A question we no longer ask after March 2020. Back in 2018, the body representing the water industry was snorting at Gove's aspersions, declaring hotly that it looked forward to its pet regulator "bringing some sorely needed facts and balance to the debate".

Well, that particular tide has now come in, and it is both metaphorically and literally full of shit. The pandemic preparation timebomb detonated to devastating effect; a number of other timebombs are on the shortest of fuses. The government has now reached a state of perfect vicious cycle, when the only thing worse than the things it does are all the things it didn't get round to doing.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist

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2023.07.01 - Around the world

- [US Supreme court retains Mississippi law disenfranchising Black voters](#)
- [Joe Biden President lays out new student debt relief plan after supreme court ruling](#)
- [Australia Rescuers race to save stranded humpback whale](#)
- [Kenya Dozens killed in crash after truck loses control at notorious junction](#)



The supreme court did not say why it was rejecting the case (it takes four votes on the court to grant review). Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

[US supreme court](#)

Supreme court leaves intact Mississippi law disenfranchising Black voters

Court turns away case on law implemented over a century ago with explicit goal of preventing Black people from voting

[Sam Levine](#) in New York

Fri 30 Jun 2023 15.58 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 17.05 EDT

The US supreme court [turned away](#) a case on Friday challenging [Mississippi's rules](#) around voting rights for people with felony convictions, leaving intact a policy implemented more than a century ago with the explicit goal of preventing Black people from voting.

Those convicted of any [one of 23 specific felonies](#) in Mississippi permanently lose the right to vote. The list is rooted in the state's 1890

constitutional convention, where delegates chose disenfranchising crimes that they believed Black people were more likely to commit. “We came here to exclude the negro. Nothing short of this will answer,” the president of the convention said at the time. The crimes, which include bribery, theft, carjacking, bigamy and timber larceny, have remained largely the same since then; Mississippi voters amended it remove burglary in 1950 and added murder and rape in 1968.

It continued to have a staggering effect in Mississippi. Sixteen per cent of the Black voting-age population remains blocked from casting a ballot, as well as 10% of the overall voting age population, according to an estimate by The Sentencing Project, [a criminal justice non-profit](#). The state is [about 38% Black](#), but Black people make up more than half of Mississippi’s disenfranchised population.

Challengers to the law argued that the policy was unconstitutional because it bore the “[discriminatory taint](#)” from the 1890 constitution. One of the plaintiffs [was Roy Harness](#), a social worker in his late 60s who is permanently barred from voting because he was convicted of forgery decades ago. Forgery was one of the original crimes included in the list of disenfranchising offenses.

“It makes me feel bad. I’ve served my country, nation ... got a degree and [I] still can’t vote, no matter what you do to prove yourself,” Harness told the Guardian in 2022.

Once a person loses their right to vote in [Mississippi](#) it is essentially impossible to get it back. To do so, a disenfranchised person must get the legislature to approve an individualized bill on their behalf by a supermajority in both chambers and then have the governor approve the bill. There are no online instructions or applications, and lawmakers can reject or deny an application for any reason.

[Hardly anyone](#) successfully makes it through the process. Between 1997 and 2022, an average of seven people successfully made it through the process each year, according to Blake Feldman, a criminal justice researcher in Mississippi.

Both a federal district judge and the US court of appeals for the fifth circuit upheld Mississippi's policy. The modifications to the policy in 1950 and 1968, the fifth circuit noted, got rid of any discrimination in the original policy.

The supreme court did not say on Friday why it was rejecting the case (it takes four votes on the court to grant review) and Justices Ketanji Brown Jackson and Sonia Sotomayor were the only two justices who noted their dissent from the denial. Jackson wrote an opinion saying the fifth circuit had committed "two egregious analytical errors that ought to be corrected".

First, she wrote, even though Mississippi voters removed a crime in 1950 and added two more in 1968, the substance of many of the original crimes from 1890 remained intact. That means that the list is still discriminatory, she wrote in a dissent that was joined by Sotomayor.

"The "remaining crimes" from [the list of crimes] pernicious origin still work the very harm the 1890 Convention intended – denying Black Mississippians the vote," she wrote.

She also took issue with a conclusion from the fifth circuit that the list of crimes would have been enacted absent discriminatory intent. A taskforce and Mississippi lawmakers studied whether to amend the list of crimes in the 1980s, nearly a century after the convention and chose not to. "Subsequent legislative attention to Mississippi's election laws indicates that Section 241 was carefully evaluated before the legislature opted to leave it unchanged.

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“The Task Force recommendations and legislative process bespeak the nondiscriminatory motivations of the public and the legislature,” the fifth circuit wrote.

Jackson said the proper inquiry for the court would have been to look at whether the convention originally would have enacted the list absent discriminatory intent.

She ended her opinion quoting the majority’s opinion in Thursday’s decision ending race-conscious admissions at universities.

“The other day, this Court declared that the ‘Constitution deals with substance, not shadows,’ and the [constitutional] prohibition against racial discrimination is ‘levelled at the thing, not the name’,” she wrote. “There are no shadows in §241, only the most toxic of substances.

“Constitutional wrongs do not right themselves. With its failure to take action, the Court has missed yet another opportunity to learn from its mistakes.”

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Joe Biden speaks at the White House on 30 June. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP

[Joe Biden](#)

Joe Biden lays out new student debt relief plan after supreme court ruling

President says ‘the court misinterpreted the constitution’ as he announces intention to use another law for debt forgiveness

Guardian staff

Fri 30 Jun 2023 17.00 EDTLast modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 17.05 EDT

[Joe Biden](#) vowed the “fight was not over” on Friday after the US supreme court ruled against his landmark student debt forgiveness plan.

“I think the court misinterpreted the constitution,” the president said, delivering remarks at the White House and announcing his intention to pivot to another law to find another path forward.

The 6-3 decision from the court dealt a blow to an estimated 40 million borrowers who had hoped the \$430bn [plan](#) would allow the 2003 Heroes Act to help curb the ongoing costs of their education. The law gave the secretary of education authority to make changes to any provision of applicable student aid program laws in the aftermath of the [September 11](#) terrorist attacks in 2001.

Biden said 16 million people had already been approved for the program, which would have given them \$10,000 to \$20,000 in relief. “More homes would’ve been bought, more businesses would’ve been started,” he said.

Biden promised to now turn to the Higher Education Act of 1965 to restore student debt relief. He also plans to enact a 12-month repayment program that would help people with student debt avoid defaulting on their loans if they couldn’t pay and avoid years of bad credit ratings.

But the supreme court decision struck down a major tenet of the Biden administration’s program with the 2024 election quickly approaching. Helping combat student debt was one of Biden’s campaign vows, especially to progressive voters in his base.

Asked if he had failed to deliver on his promise, Biden reacted quickly. “I didn’t give any false hope,” he said. “Republicans snatched away the hope that was given.”

Biden also doubled down on what he called the “hypocrisy of Republican elected officials” in an [earlier statement](#). He pointed to the higher cost of the paycheck protection program approved by Republicans in 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic-era program gave businesses loans for their payroll and allowed the principal of the loan to be partially or fully forgiven. The program benefited some members of Congress.

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“They had no problem with billions in pandemic-related loans to businesses – including hundreds of thousands and in some cases millions of dollars for their own businesses. And those loans were forgiven,” Biden said in the statement. “But when it came to providing relief to millions of hard-working Americans, they did everything in their power to stop it.

“It’s only about forgiving loans they have to pay,” he said at the White House.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/30/joe-biden-new-student-debt-relief-plan-scotus-reaction>

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A humpback whale was found stranded on Seven Mile beach on the NSW mid-north coast by a member of the public. Photograph: Twitter/Department of Environment and Heritage

[New South Wales](#)

Stranded humpback whale dies on NSW mid-north coast despite rescue effort

National Parks and Wildlife Service led operation to try to save 30-tonne whale which washed ashore on Seven Mile beach

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[*Mostafa Rachwani*](#)
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Sat 1 Jul 2023 06.08 EDTFirst published on Sat 1 Jul 2023 05.24 EDT

A 30-tonne humpback whale has died after being washed ashore on Seven Mile beach on the [New South Wales](#) mid-north coast.

The whale became stranded early on Saturday morning and was found by a member of the public on the north end of the beach. It died on Saturday night, at around 7pm, with the cause of death still uncertain.

Earlier in the day the adult whale was reported to be in good condition, with authorities from Organisation for the Rescue and Research of Cetaceans in Australia (Orrca), Sea World and Ballina shire council assisting the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in trying to get it back to sea.

A desperate mission is unfolding right now to help save a stranded whale at Seven Mile Beach, Lennox Head. NPWS, ORRCA and Sea World are all onsite providing assistance, while it's hoped the high tide at 5pm can give the whale a chance at refloating. More at 6pm [@nbnnews pic.twitter.com/aqSjhXpYIR](#)

— Josephine Shannon (@Josie_Shannon_) [July 1, 2023](#)

A spokesperson for the National Parks and Wildlife Service said that first aid for the whale was a high priority.

“First aid for the whale (shade, posture and pain relief) continues to be a priority. Public safety is also of priority and members of the public are asked to please keep away at this time.”

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Authorities worked quickly to get the whale some shade and keep it cool, amid a scramble to keep it safe.

A humpback [#whale](#) remains stranded at Lennox Head. For the safety of everyone, NPWS asks members of the public to please keep away. Your cooperation is crucial in minimising potential disruptions and

allowing our team to focus on the whale's well-being. Our vet [@ORRCA_Inc](#) on site pic.twitter.com/foUAE5b6jC

— DPE Environment and Heritage (inc NPWS) (@nswenviromedia)
[July 1, 2023](#)

Skippy Love from Orrca told Guardian Australia that trenches had been dug around the whale with an excavator, to make it easier for the tide to carry it back out to sea, but added there was still uncertainty about if it would be enough.

“We’re dealing with a 30-tonne animal,” she said.

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Authorities were yet to determine how the whale ended up on the beach, with Love saying that without any obvious injury, it could be a disease that has caused it to end up on the beach.

“Being that it’s in good body condition, and there’s no obvious injury like a boat strike or anything like that, it’s hard to determine what has happened.

“Humpbacks tend to strand on their own and it normally indicates that there is some kind of a problem that has occurred to make that happen.”

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Kenya: road accident at dangerous junction kills at least 50 – video

[The ObserverKenya](#)

Death toll in Kenya road crash rises to 52

Truck lost control at notorious junction in Londiani, hitting people and vehicles in latest road catastrophe

Agence France-Presse in Nairobi

Sat 1 Jul 2023 12.44 EDTFirst published on Sat 1 Jul 2023 05.32 EDT

The death toll of a road crash in western [Kenya](#) rose to 52 on Saturday, officials said, as rescuers worked to clear the wreckage from one of the deadliest traffic accidents in the country in recent years.

A truck carrying a shipping container veered out of control and ploughed into multiple other vehicles and people thronging a busy roadside junction on Friday evening, plunging the nation into shock and mourning.

Erick Mutai, the governor of Kericho county, where the crash occurred, gave an updated death toll of 52 and said it included 31 men, 18 women and two children.

The transport minister, Kipchumba Murkomen, said on a visit to the crash site at Londiani junction that new safety measures would be introduced after what he described as a “terrible” and “painful” tragedy.

“Investigations have been launched to establish the cause of this accident, but we urge drivers to be cautious and follow the rules,” he told reporters. In a later statement, he also gave a death toll of 52 and said 32 people had been injured, adding that the truck involved was registered in Rwanda.

The Kenyan station Citizen TV reported that the vehicle's driver had died, but this could not immediately be confirmed independently.

The trailer rammed into private cars, minibuses, *boda bodas* (motorcycle taxis) and market stalls on the side of a busy highway between the lakeside town of Nakuru and Kericho, an area known for its lush tea plantations.

Footage emerged late on Friday showing the mangled wreckage of multiple vehicles as rescuers worked in the dark in pouring rain and ambulance sirens wailed.

On Saturday, large crowds of onlookers were at the scene, where the overturned container was stuck in a ditch. Debris, including car seats, piles of fruit, a damaged axle and a lone black boot, was strewn across a wide area.

“The accident happened in a flash. Many of them had no time to escape,” said one witness, Joel Rotich. “There was a lot of confusion because people were screaming all over and everyone was running after the accident.”

Kenyan leaders including President William Ruto expressed their condolences, along with the African Union Commission chief, Moussa Faki Mahamat. “My prayers and thoughts go to the families affected by the Londiani road tragedy, with wishes for a full recovery to the injured,” Faki tweeted.

The Kenya Red Cross, which has been involved in the rescue efforts, launched a blood donation drive for the injured survivors.

Murkomen said on Saturday that the government planned to arrange for street traders to move from roadside areas to designated markets in an effort to avoid such catastrophes in future.

He also called for increased safety measures at the site of the accident and for long-distance truck drivers to ensure that they take proper rest breaks and take refresher courses.

According to figures from Kenya's national transport and safety authority, at least 21,760 people were involved in road accidents last year, and 4,690

died.

Last July, at least 34 people were killed when a bus plunged into a river at a notorious blackspot in central Kenya, while a bus crash in October 2018 in Kericho county claimed the lives of 50 people.

In a speech in December, Murkomen blamed human error for much of the carnage on the roads, including drink-driving, speeding, fatigue and dangerous overtaking.

The World Health Organization said in September last year that Africa had the highest rate of road traffic fatalities in the world, with more than 800 people killed every day.

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Headlines monday 26 june 2023

- [Stephen Lawrence Met police name new suspect in murder](#)
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- [Inflation Jeremy Hunt to ask UK regulators to investigate firms exploiting price rises](#)
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- [Russia Defence minister shown on TV in bid to restore calm after Wagner mutiny](#)



Stephen Lawrence, who was killed in a racist attack in south-east London in April 1993. Photograph: London Metropolitan Police/EPA

[Stephen Lawrence](#)

Met police name new suspect in Stephen Lawrence murder

Matthew White, who died in 2021, reported to have been central to the case, a BBC investigation has found

[Jonathan Yerushalmy](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 02.45 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 05.57 EDT

The [Metropolitan police](#) have named a major new suspect in the Stephen Lawrence murder, admitting too many mistakes were made in the initial investigation.

Matthew White, who died in 2021 aged 50, was named [after a BBC investigation into the killing](#) of the black teenager, who was murdered in a racist attack in south-east London in April 1993.

The BBC reported that five prime suspects became widely known after the murder, but the public inquiry said there were “five or six” attackers.

In 2011, White was named publicly for the first time at the trial of David Norris and Gary Dobson, who were given life sentences for the murder in 2012, but only as a witness.

It took 19 years for Norris and Dobson to be convicted of Lawrence’s murder and an [inquiry into the police investigation](#) said it had been “marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership”.

The BBC says it re-examined the case and found evidence that White was central to the case.



Matthew White. Photograph: BBC News

The BBC’s inquiry found that witnesses had said White told them he had been present during the attack on Lawrence, evidence showed his alibi was false and police surveillance photos of White showed a resemblance to witness accounts of an unidentified fair-haired attacker.

A statement given to the BBC from Scotland Yard said that “unfortunately, too many mistakes were made in the initial investigation ... the impact of them continues to be seen”.

Dr Neville Lawrence, Stephen’s father, said any further police inquiry should be conducted by another force. “They must be able to find a decent police force who could investigate,” he told the BBC.

Stephen’s mother, Doreen Lawrence, told the BBC that police officers who failed to investigate White should face serious consequences. “Only when police officers lose their jobs can the public have confidence that failure and incompetence will not be tolerated and that change will happen,” said Lady Lawrence.

The BBC investigation reportedly found that a relative of White tried to speak to the Met after the murder but the lead was not pursued. When the relative did speak to police, 20 years later, they said White had admitted being present during the attack.

Another witness reportedly told police in 2000 that White had admitted being part of the attack.

The Met said the handling of the approach by White’s relative in 1993 was “a significant and regrettable error”.

The force told the BBC that White was arrested twice over the murder, in 2000 and 2013, and that files were sent to the Crown Prosecution Service in 2005 and 2014. But on both occasions prosecutors said there was no realistic prospect of conviction.

In 2020, the Metropolitan police [declared the murder investigation inactive](#) and said there were no further lines of inquiry. At the time, the Met said the case would be reviewed every two years and it would be reopened if new leads were to emerge.

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[Business live](#)**Business**

UK fixed mortgage rates rise to seven-month highs – as it happened

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Criticism is growing that supermarkets and firms in other sectors are raising prices to boost profit margins under the cover of high inflation. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

[Inflation](#)

Jeremy Hunt to ask UK regulators to investigate firms exploiting price rises

Chancellor to meet watchdogs to discuss claims that company profiteering is stoking inflation

- [Business live: Primark-owner lifts profit forecast after price rises](#)

PA Media

Mon 26 Jun 2023 02.50 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 03.50 EDT

Jeremy Hunt will ask industry regulators what they are doing about any companies exploiting rampant inflation by raising prices.

The chancellor will meet the [Competition and Markets Authority](#) (CMA), and the watchdogs for energy, water and communications on Wednesday. He will press them on whether there is a profiteering problem in their sectors and what they are doing about it, according to a Treasury source.

The meeting with the CMA, [Ofgem](#), Ofwat and Ofcom comes after the Bank of England suggested some retailers were increasing prices or failing to pass on lower costs to consumers as a way of increasing profit margins amid stubborn inflation.

Rishi Sunak, the prime minister, has warned retailers about pricing “responsibly and fairly”, saying household weekly shopping bills had “gone up far too much in the past few months”.

Hunt also confirmed that ministers were talking to the food industry about “potential measures to ease the pressure on consumers”.

Their comments prompted an industry backlash, with the British Retail Consortium, the trade body representing the sector, saying there had been a “regular stream of price cuts” by supermarkets despite “extremely tight” profit margins.

Official figures last week showed consumer prices index inflation failed to ease as hoped in May, [remaining at 8.7%](#).

The [Bank of England subsequently raised interest rates to a 15-year high](#) in a shock move designed to tame inflation.

Sunak on Sunday urged cash-strapped Britons to “hold our nerve” over high interest rates as he stressed “there is no alternative” to stamping out inflation.

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He said “inflation is the enemy” as he defended the Bank of England’s latest rate rise, even as it piled pressure on mortgage holders.

The chancellor last week [agreed measures with banks](#) aimed at cooling the mortgage crisis, including allowing borrowers to extend the term of their mortgages or move to an interest-only plan temporarily.

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[Ukraine war live](#)[Ukraine](#)

Russia-Ukraine war live: Putin says Wagner uprising was ‘doomed to fail’ – as it happened

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Mikhail Mishustin, Russia's prime minister, chairs a meeting with his deputies in Moscow on Monday. Photograph: Sputnik/Reuters

[Russia](#)

Russian PM calls on country to unite behind Vladimir Putin

Mikhail Mishustin says Russia has faced 'a challenge to its stability' after Yevgeny Prigozhin's mutiny

- [Russia-Ukraine war – latest news updates](#)

[Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow

Mon 26 Jun 2023 07.23 EDTFirst published on Mon 26 Jun 2023 04.49 EDT

The Russian warlord Yevgeny Prigozhin has reappeared for the first time since abandoning his armed mutiny on Saturday evening, issuing a defiant

11-minute statement in which he defended the Wagner uprising and said that “society demanded it.”

In the statement, Prigozhin denied that Wagner sought to topple Putin and said that the uprising had shown that there were “serious problems with security on the whole territory of our country.”

“It was not our goal to overthrow the regime,” Prigozhin said in the voice memo, which was uploaded to his Concord Group’s Telegram page.

“We stopped at that moment, when it became clear that much blood would be spilled,” he continued, describing the progress of a military convoy that reached striking distance of Moscow. “That’s why we believe that the demonstration of what we were planning to do was enough. Our decision to turn back had two factors: we didn’t want to spill Russian blood. Secondly, we marched as a demonstration of our protest.”

In the statement, Prigozhin did not confirm his whereabouts or say if he was planning to move into exile in Belarus as part of a settlement negotiated with the Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko. Prigozhin was rumoured to have been spotted at the Green City Hotel in Minsk on Monday, according to the Russian news channel BRIEF. A receptionist at the hotel contacted by the Guardian said she “could not share any information” about guests.

In the statement, Prigozhin said that his troops would resist being reformed under the Russian defence ministry, would not sign contracts, and that he may even be allowed to continue his operations in Belarus, a development that could

He once again accused the Russian defence ministry of targeting his troops with artillery fire, calling it the “trigger for us to move out immediately.”

“The goal of the march was to not allow the destruction of the Wagner private military company and hold to account the officials who through their unprofessional actions have committed a massive number of errors. Society demanded it.”

Prigozhin acknowledged that his troops had killed Russian airmen during their uprising, saying they “regretted that they were required to carry out strikes against aircraft but they were hitting our forces with bombs and rocket strikes.”

He also claimed that the troops movement into Russia was a “master. class” in how Russia should have carried out its Feb. 24 invasion of [Ukraine](#), which failed to achieve its goal of taking Kyiv.

Russia has faced “a challenge to its stability” and must remain united behind Vladimir Putin, the country’s prime minister said in the aftermath of [Yevgeny Prigozhin’s mutiny](#).

“The consolidation of the whole of society is especially important; we need to act together, as one team, and maintain the unity of all forces, rallying around the president,” Mikhail Mishustin said at a televised government meeting.

Will the Wagner mutiny cost Putin power in Russia? – video explainer

The former head of Russia’s federal tax service, a technocrat who was appointed PM in 2020, also took a swipe at the west. “As the president noted, virtually the entire military, economic, information machine of the west is directed against us,” he said.

Earlier on Monday, Russia’s defence minister appeared on state TV and emergency counter-terrorism measures were cancelled in Moscow and surrounding regions as the Kremlin sought to restore calm following the aborted mutiny by heavily armed mercenary fighters from Prigozhin’s Wagner group.

ADD

The Russian government also appeared to be stopping short of immediately disbanding the mercenary group, which continued recruiting activities in Russia and appeared to have returned to bases.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov suggested that the group would continue to operate in Africa, saying that Russian military instructors in

countries like the Central African Republic and Mali

The defence ministry released footage that it claimed showed Sergei Shoigu “visiting the forward command post of one of the formations of the ‘Western’ group of troops”. In the video, Shoigu is shown riding in a vehicle and arriving at a command post, where he listens to reports from officers and pores over a battlefield map.

Russian defence minister shown visiting troops in Ukraine after Wagner rebellion – video

If confirmed, the footage would be the first sighting of Shoigu since Prigozhin declared war on him and his ministry on Friday.

However, the video was released without sound and it was unclear when and where it was filmed. Russian news agencies have in the past released pre-filmed segments called “*preserves*”, attempting to show that officials including [Vladimir Putin](#) were working in the Kremlin when they could be hundreds of miles away.

Nonetheless, the footage showed tacit government support for Shoigu, whom Prigozhin had sought to oust with his uprising.

On Saturday, Prigozhin had claimed Shoigu had fled Rostov before his Wagner fighters took control of the Southern Military District command. In extraordinary footage from the military headquarters, he strong-armed a deputy defence minister into an on-camera debate and called on Shoigu and the chief of the general staff, Valery Gerasimov, to meet him in Rostov.



Red Square in Moscow. Counter-terrorism measures introduced on Friday in the Russian capital have been removed. Photograph: Dmitri Lovetsky/AP

Moscow city, Moscow region, and Voronezh region officials have announced they will end counter-terrorism regimes introduced on Friday, when it appeared Russia was on the brink of civil war.

As Prigozhin's mercenaries moved on Moscow on Saturday, officials introduced severe restrictions meant to keep the public off the streets and allowing officials extraordinary powers to detain Russians or commandeer private vehicles in case they deemed it necessary.

Law enforcement agencies ordered evacuations of major cultural institutions including the Pushkin Museum and GES-2 cultural centres, Gorky Park and others, cancelled cultural and musical events and introduced a blanket ban on public events.

Troops have also been dismantling barricades and repairing roads blocked with anti-tank traps set up to stop the Wagner convoy, as a sense of [uneasy normalcy returned to the Russian capital](#) on Sunday.

Prigozhin has repeatedly blamed Shoigu and Gerasimov for his fighters' deaths in Ukraine. The Wagner chief has not been seen or heard from since

he [left Rostov with his troops on Saturday evening](#) with an apparent deal offering him amnesty and exile in Belarus.

The Russian state news agency RIA Novosti, citing security sources, reported on Monday that the criminal investigation into Prigozhin for organising an armed mutiny was still being investigated by the FSB security services.

The Kremlin had said that Prigozhin had Putin's guarantee he could go into exile in Belarus and that the criminal case would be scrapped.

ADD

Wagner says it is continuing to recruit in Russia

A television segment on the Sunday evening show Moscow. Kremlin. Putin also featured the Russian president in his first appearance since he addressed the nation on Saturday morning, where he called the mutiny "internal treason" and said he would "not allow a civil war". The Sunday night spot appeared to be pre-filmed, with Putin discussing his daily routine and giving no comments on the largest armed uprising in recent Russian history.

The conflict between Prigozhin and Shoigu was at the centre of the weekend's mutiny.

"I don't think that this was an attempt to replace Putin," said Rob Lee, a US-based expert on the Russian military. "I think basically this was a factual dispute between two important Russian figures that became a challenge to Putin, which is the abnormal part of this."

The Russian ministry of defence had demanded that all paramilitary units, including Wagner, sign contracts that would de facto put them under military control. Details of the agreement between Prigozhin and the Kremlin remain unclear, including the fate of his Wagner mercenaries, which number in the thousands.

Lee said Prigozhin's capture of a major city and dressing-down of senior military officers, including a deputy minister of defence, had "undermined Russian state control".

“I don’t know that there’s going to be a direct effect on the battlefield, because Wagner was not playing a role currently on the battlefield. They were replaced in Bakhmut in early June, and I don’t know that they have any guys on the frontlines.”

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Unexpectedly charming ... Axl Rose and Slash of Guns N' Roses performing their epic set on Saturday night. Photograph: Anthony Harvey/Shutterstock

[Glastonbury 2023](#)

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Glastonbury 2023 review: giggly rap on Friday, Smiths covers on Saturday – and a mystery act that surprised no one

Arctic Monkeys, Fred Again, Raye, Lana Del Rey and Guns N' Roses all astounded. And if everyone knew Foo Fighters would turn up, just who might share the stage with Elton John was the stuff of rumours



[Alexis Petridis](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 28 Jun 2023 09.11 EDT

This year's Glastonbury festival site seemed to be as awash with wild speculation as ever. Sunday's headliner Elton John would supposedly be performing with special guest Britney Spears – for some reason, a post on Spears's Instagram account featuring a photograph of a segmented apple was [held up as incontrovertible proof that she was boarding a Somerset-bound helicopter](#). Others were convinced that Elton was going to bring on Harry Styles: after last year, when you could barely walk a few feet without hearing someone sagely informing someone else that Styles was definitely going to turn up on stage with Paul McCartney, or Billie Eilish, or Kendrick Lamar, or perhaps dishing up pad thai in a food stall just south of the Other

stage, the former One Direction heart-throb now appears to be a permanent fixture of the Glasto rumour mill. Most lurid of all, there were those who insisted that the final British show of John's record-breaking farewell tour was going to be enlivened by the spectral appearance of a hologram of the late George Michael.

Nevertheless, what was supposed to be the weekend's biggest surprise turned out to be its worst-kept secret. Stories that the mysterious band who appear on Friday afternoon's Pyramid stage bill as the Churnups are actually Blur or Pulp – two Britpop heroes currently reformed and playing shows – have long died out: everyone seems to know [it is actually Foo Fighters](#), playing more or less the same slot at the festival as they did 25 years ago, when they were making their Glastonbury debut. Still, the audience gamely play along, roaring as if it's an incredible and welcome revelation when the Churnups' logo vanishes from the stage-side screens and is replaced by that of Dave Grohl and co.



The secret's out ... Dave Grohl of Foo Fighters on the Pyramid stage, with new drummer Josh Freese. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

Foregone conclusion or not, there's a genuine sense of excitement about their hour-long performance. Foo Fighters' recent albums have arrived with an accompanying sense of obligation, as if they have been made simply to give

the band an excuse to continue touring without slipping into the “heritage rock” category, filled with songs designed to tolerably plug the gaps between the hits in concert. However, this year’s [But Here We Are](#) – their first album since the 2022 death of drummer Taylor Hawkins – felt charged with a fresh sense of purpose and energy, as does their Glastonbury set. The band literally run on stage, already playing their guitars; as they charge through All My Life and a version of 2020’s No Son of Mine that comes interpolated with the riffs of Black Sabbath’s Paranoid and Metallica’s Enter Sandman, they sound more raw and vital than any artists rightfully should 28 years into their career. Grohl’s daughter Violet makes a brief appearance on vocals – impressively, she’s the very model of gum-chewing nonchalance in front of tens of thousands of people – but the most striking thing about their performance is how relaxed the songs sound, extended with lengthy solos and impressive fills from Hawkins’ replacement, Josh Freese. However awful the circumstances leading up to their most recent album, they sound like a band with something to prove, who are enjoying themselves enormously in the process of proving it.

Glastonbury is famously eclectic, its sheer scale and plethora of stages enabling it to be all things to all people: this is an event at which you can kickstart your Saturday morning by watching [Rick Astley](#) performing AC/DC covers while playing the drums, the Unthanks essaying trad arr folk, New York alt-disco trio Say She She followed by veteran Congolese soukous musician Kanda Bongo Man, or indeed by heading up to the Park stage to take in post-minimalist composer Max Richter accompanied by a string quartet and Tilda Swinton, reading the spoken word passages from his 2003 suite The Blue Notebooks.



The face of optimism ... Carly Rae Jepsen. Photograph: Maja Smiejkowska/Shutterstock

Even so, the sense that the festival is now actively trying to court two different generations at once feels very pronounced on the two main stages. On Friday afternoon, the Lightning Seeds lead a nostalgic singalong through Three Lions, before being replaced on the Other stage by [Carly Rae Jepsen](#), resplendent in a pink trouser suit, belting out the dance-pop of Call Me Maybe and I Really Like You from atop a platform draped with gold lamé. Jepsen is held to be one of pop's great mysteries: since her 2015 breakthrough *Emotion*, her albums have been rapturously received by critics – she's very much a poster girl for the influential strain of music criticism known as "poptimism", a reaction against rock's dominance of the music press – but have consistently underperformed commercially. Her Glastonbury set gives an indication of what the issue might be, beyond the fact that people who buy pop albums couldn't give a monkey's what music critics say about anything. Jepsen is infectiously enthusiastic – running from the stage to press the flesh with the front rows, before realising she's not going to make it back to the stage in time for the start of the next song – but she isn't a hugely charismatic performer: her songs are great, but whatever ingredient she has that might set her apart from the serried ranks of pop vocalists isn't obvious. Still, if it's charisma you're after, Sharleen Spiteri has it in abundance during Texas's parallel set on the Pyramid stage: there is

something hugely engaging about the gulf between the honeyed sweetness of her singing during Summer Sun, and her Glasgow-accented earthiness between songs, berating the crowd for their “shit dad dancing”.



Generating mass euphoria ... Fred Again on the Other stage. Photograph: Maja Smiejkowska/Shutterstock

The task of following [Foo Fighters](#) hangs heavy over Royal Blood, who perform to a significantly smaller crowd than you might expect of a band second from top of the bill on the Pyramid stage. You get the feeling people have had their fill of hard rock and headed off to hear something different. Certainly, the crowd that assembles at the Other stage for dance auteur Fred Again suggests so. There are so many festivalgoers there that queues form just to get into the field, a state of affairs that seems to render Fred Again himself almost speechless: whenever he attempts to talk to the audience, his voice dissolves into disbelieving giggles. But, watching him, you can totally understand his popularity: his sound draws on Burial-esque dubstep, grime – Rumble features MC Flowdan – and house, neatly tied up with a keen pop sensibility. You could argue that the end result is a little depthless – there’s a one-size-fits-all quality to the vocal samples he uses, which tend to non-specific evocations of vague melancholy (“pull me out of this”, “the night is dark”), but that feels like quibbling in the face of its ability to generate mass euphoria, particularly this evening, where it fits the moment perfectly. It

appears that a lot of those present are using his set as a kind of aperitif before hurling themselves into an evening of dance tents and altered states, a job for which it's perfectly suited: it's music that carries a sense of anticipation – the promise of the night, if you like – within its textures.

Arctic Monkeys' headlining Pyramid stage set presents something of a conundrum. They are probably the biggest alternative rock band in Britain, but, judging by the albums chart, their mass popularity rests on two albums, their 2006 debut and 2013's muscular, hard-rock influenced AM: certainly, there have been fewer takers for the more expansive and serpentine sound of the more recent [Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino](#) and [The Car](#), albums which also deal largely in slow-paced atmospherics. The obvious thing to do when confronted with a huge festival crowd would be to lean heavily on their biggest sellers, but a band who called their debut album [Whatever You Say I Am, That's What I'm Not](#) were perhaps never likely to take the obvious, crowd-pleasing option. They open with The Car's brooding *Sculptures of Anything Goes*, play *Whatever You Say I Am ...*'s *Mardy Bum* at funereal pace, dramatically rearrange *505* – a huge viral hit on TikTok that one suspects introduced them to a younger audience – throw in occasional songs from AM, then dissipate the excitement they generate with the next track. It's a state of affairs compounded by the fact that frontman Alex Turner inhabits a character on stage – a kind of parodic version of an oily cabaret crooner. You can understand why he does it, and the band's diehard fans love it, but it's hard to generate a rapport with a broader audience if they aren't in on the joke, if everything you say to them sounds sarcastic: he even has a way of saying thank you that sounds like it's got inverted commas around it.



A parody cabaret crooner ... Alex Turner fronting Arctic Monkeys' Friday-night headline slot. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

The set peters out rather than ends explosively – an extended version of The Car's Body Paint – but by then, a significant chunk of the crowd have drifted off: for all Glastonbury's reputation for bountiful good vibes, there's a certain no-thanks brutality to audiences here, borne out by the fact that there's always something else to go and see. It's hard to work out whether to applaud the band for bullishly sticking to their guns and doing things their way, or see it as a missed opportunity: on social media, it provokes a debate that rages into the night.

Saturday's bill looks like such an embarrassment of riches, it's hard to work out a path through it: you're going to miss something you want to see. There's a strong UK rap presence on both main stages. It would take a fairly mammoth effort to dislike the cheeky shtick of Manchester's Aitch – he arranges a moshpit in the crowd and plays My G, a song dedicated to his sister, who has Down's syndrome, featuring a sample of Ed Sheeran, then follows it with the words "but let's not get soft and sentimental, let's go fucking mental instead", then brings on singer Anne-Marie to perform their hit Psycho in character as a warring couple. [Central Cee](#), meanwhile, is both a lavishly gifted rapper, capable of giving drill a pop sheen without denuding it of its edge – a hugely impressive feat – and responsible for perhaps the

flat-out weirdest moment of the weekend, when he elects to perform his current No 1 hit Sprinter not just in the company of guest star Dave, but a profoundly nonplussed-looking baby (the same baby, apparently, that features in the song's video).



Astonishing power ... Raye on the Pyramid stage on Saturday. Photograph: Dave Hogan/Hogan Media/Shutterstock

Pop star Raye can rap, too, although your attention is grabbed more by the astonishing power of her voice – she's emotive and effortless, never descending into showy oversinging – and her easy Croydon-accented charm on stage. "Dating rappers," she advises, "I wouldn't recommend it." She's also blessed with a plethora of fantastic, hard-hitting songs that act as a kind of diary, detailing the pitfalls that await a young woman in the music business, from sexually predatory producers to unsympathetic record labels to substance abuse. A year ago, she had been more or less written off by her label, she explains, and now she's holding a sizeable Glastonbury crowd rapt, investing Ice Cream Man with such force that she seems to be struggling not to cry as she sings. For the more nostalgically minded, there's punk supergroup Generation Sex blazing their way through a set of Sex Pistols and Generation X classics on the Other stage – "I'm at a party at Stonehenge later, I'm gonna get fucked up tonight," offers the surprisingly elocuted voice of Billy Idol as a parting shot – while up on the Woodsies'

stage, Rick Astley – him again – is performing a set of songs by the Smiths accompanied by indie band Blossoms. The response is immediate euphoria, a mass singalong of such volume that it threatens to drown Astley out entirely, a sense that he’s not playing a gig so much as performing a public service in reclaiming the joy of the Smiths’ back catalogue for anyone put off by [some of the more troubling pronouncements from the band’s former lead singer](#). He also looks as if he’s having the time of his life doing it: stopping the sets to drink “a snifter” with his backing band, literally miming hanging someone during Panic, flailing the microphone lead around in an affectionate impersonation of Morrissey. The fact that there’s an enormous inflatable sausage being batted around the crowd – something you suspect would cause the notoriously meat-opposing Morrissey to abandon the gig at a stroke – only seems to add to the dizzy enjoyment.



An explosion of elation ... Lizzo on the Pyramid stage. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

There’s also dizzy enjoyment on the Pyramid stage, courtesy of [Lizzo](#), who looks incredible in a succession of catsuits, surrounded by plus-sized dancers and an all-female band – called, magnificently, the Lizzbians – her face a constantly shifting mass of stagey expressions. You could, if you wished, take a cynical attitude to the way she constantly underlines her message of self-love – and a more cynical attitude still to the fact that she

starts hawking her shapewear range, Yitty, between songs – but her performance is such an explosion of elation, filled with wit and energy and hooky tunes, that you don't really feel like taking her to task over any of it.

Perhaps Lizzo and Astley's good humour is infectious: the big surprise about [Guns N' Roses' headlining performance](#) is how polite Axl Rose – once the living embodiment of shows-starting-hours-late and litigious bad attitude – is. Their performance starts bang on time (no such luck for [Lana Del Rey](#) fans, who wait half an hour for the singer to show up on the Other stage and see her set cut short by eight songs as a result). “You had a good day?” he asks the audience, solicitously. “Glad to hear it.”



Cut short ... Lana Del Rey on the Other stage. Photograph: Samir Hussein/WireImage

If Rose's falsetto is a little more ragged now than it was in the late 80s, he can still hit the high notes, while the band's appealingly loose stew of Stones-y slide guitar, metallic edge and punk insolence – their version of Down on the Farm is presumably the first time a song by second-wave Brit punk band UK Subs has boomed forth from the Pyramid stage – underlines why they were so successful in the first place. Their set not only picks its way through their back catalogue, it pays homage to their influences, sartorially and musically: bassist Duff McKagan sports a leather vest with

the logo of the debut album by Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers; as well as the UK Subs, there are covers of the Stooges' TV Eye and snatches of Jimi Hendrix and Alice Cooper worked into their own songs. It ends with a pile-up of authentic classics – November Rain, Night Train, Paradise City, the latter featuring Dave Grohl, beaming like a man keen to suggest that the famous feud between Guns N' Roses and Nirvana was nothing to do with him. "What a lovely evening," offers Axl Rose, like a man taking his leave from a dinner party: unexpectedly charming to the last.

This article was amended on 28 June as Guns N' Roses sung Down on the Farm not Back on the Farm.

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Rachel Smith (second left) with fellow members of the WaterAid loo crews.
Photograph: Ben Roberts

[Glastonbury 2023](#)

‘Fetch the mop – it’s a code brown!’: the diary of a Glastonbury toilet cleaner

Seven hundred WaterAid volunteers kept the festival's loos in working order. One rubber-gloved hero shares her highs and lows

Rachel Smith

Mon 26 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Wed 28 Jun 2023 10.19 EDT

WaterAid has been working with Glastonbury since 1994 to do the very important job of keeping the festival's toilets clean. That was the first year I attended the festival; I've been back many times, and this is my second year running working as a [WaterAid](#) volunteer on the loo crew. The charity's work at the festival also raises awareness of the lack of access for many to basic sanitation: more than one in five people across the world don't have access to decent toilets. Being here changes the way you think about these things we take for granted. I am glad to pull on a pair of rubber gloves and give something back to the festival.

Tuesday

Great to be on site in our crew camping area. There are 700 of us volunteering for WaterAid, so our field is tightly packed, with the usual game of tent Tetris to fit everyone in. With catering, hot showers, tea and coffee urns, and plugs for phone charging, we are well looked after. I catch up with old friends from last year and meet new ones. Shift patterns have been received and mine look great: four six-hour shifts, all of Friday off and the last shift finishing at 6pm on Sunday in time for Elton John.

Wednesday

My midday shift starts and I find out which team I'm in. There is much anticipation finding out which will be our "long drops". Last year, we were roaming across a big stretch of the site covering five different areas. This year, we've got the Pyramid stage loos, so it's going to be busy but at least we can clean along to Blondie on Sunday afternoon.

We start the shift in the pounding rain but this soon gives way to glorious sunshine. We have three blocks of 72 long drops to clean. For those who haven't had the pleasure, long drops are toilet blocks built over a deep pit;

each cubicle is open air with a single shelf with a seat shape moulded into it. If it is raining, you get wet while you do your business. The open-air aspect is much preferable to an enclosed, stinky portable toilet.

The metal creak and clank of the long-drop doors as they open and slam is a Glastonbury soundtrack. “Oh, how I’ve missed that sound,” exclaims one loo user.

We accidentally clean the wrong 72 first, which we are happy to gift to the team that turns up to do them. The festival has just started, so these are inoffensive and quick to clean. We also litter-pick the area: there are lots of cider cups left in the traps.

In the words of James, we do implore users to please just “sit down”, but we often find muddy bootprints on the shelf of the toilet seat where non-sitters have taken the long drop to even greater heights. We happily mop up these errant footprints, but unfortunately not everyone hits the bog bullseye.

We only have one code brown on this shift, which requires a full sluice with the mop bucket followed by a very thorough mopping.

We hear excited children shouting: “Put your head in and shout – it echoes!” I wouldn’t recommend this, to be honest – falling in just isn’t worth thinking about.

Overall, a successful shift: camaraderie is high and poop levels are low so far. But this is the calm before the storm.

Loo rating: 4.5/5

Thursday



‘I have my first moment of retching ...’ Rachel Smith. Photograph: Sarah Phillips/The Guardian

A 6pm till midnight shift. The team is in good spirits but we are aware this is where the fun really begins, with most of the festival-goers on site now. Our loos are much busier this shift but with no acts on at the Pyramid stage, our customers are mostly passing traffic.

We have a higher code brown count today of four, including one prize specimen that Gillian McKeith would be proud of, which was found on the edge of a seat. It is an easy poop putt with a tap of the mop: hole in one. With a quick spray with plenty of disinfectant and a good mopping, the trap is ready and back in action for the next user.

The team is thrilled to finish our shift and looking forward to Friday off.

Loo rating: 3/5

Saturday

A 5.30am alarm wake-up for our 6am to midday shift. We approach the long drops with trepidation, and rightly so. The amount of rubbish around the toilet seats is mind-blowing. Cups, cans, full drinks, plates with food, vapes, a pint of milk, a G-string and a pair of very poopy pants left at the scene of

the crime (they had attempted to clean up with said pants, bless). One loo is such an absolute swamp of human effluent that I have my first moment of retching. Someone finds a snoring reveller fast asleep on the drop with underwear around their ankles.

The first few hours of this shift really felt like hard work, but we are satisfied with our efforts and survey our renewed and revived loos with pride. By 8am, many sleepyheads are rocking up to the loos and sinks for their morning business. Saturday morning ablutions in the sun, Glasto-style, are in full force, ranging from improv jerrycan showers and bucket baths to a cold wet flannel wipe. It is a hive of activity, and great to see our five-star clean loos as the backdrop. The hot mess we tackled is a distant memory – for now.

Loo rating: 1/5

Sunday

My final shift is midday til 6pm on Sunday. This is our first time experiencing the huge Pyramid crowds, with immense people traffic, and we are busy trying to keep on top of the great standard of loos left by the previous team. We feel as if we have seen it all now – it's all water off a loo crew's back by this point.

The best advice for loo users is to try not to look down. Unfortunately, we have no choice when cleaning and mopping the seats, so I do have images that may take a while to unsee.

Festival-goers have been so appreciative and make a point of thanking us throughout the weekend; we have had claps, bows and curtsies. The pleasure of opening a toilet door for someone after cleaning it and telling them: "Your loo is now the cleanest one in Glastonbury," has not worn off.

Yes, we have seen some sights and it has been hard work at times, but it has also been a thoroughly good giggle, working in an awesome team and doing something worthwhile for a fantastic charity. Hopefully smell you next year, Glastonbury!

Loo rating: 2.5/5

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‘What a beautiful bunch they are’: Martin Parr’s Glastonbury 2023

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jun/26/this-is-what-british-youth-look-like-martin-parrs-glastonbury-2023>



Lewis Capaldi on the Pyramid stage on Saturday. Photograph: Anthony Harvey/Shutterstock

[Glastonbury 2023](#)

Capaldi's crowd and Del Rey cut short: memorable Glastonbury 2023 moments

Audience comes to Scottish singer's aid at Pyramid stage, while late-arriving US star performs a cappella after midnight curfew

[Tobi Thomas](#)

[@tobithomas](#)

Sun 25 Jun 2023 12.36 EDTLast modified on Sun 25 Jun 2023 15.56 EDT

As this year's [Glastonbury festival](#) comes to a close, here is a look back at some of the weekend's most memorable moments.

McCartney's surprise appearances

Paul McCartney, who headlined the Pyramid stage at the festival last year, made an unexpected appearance midway through Saturday night's performance by the Pretenders.

This time around, his appearance was a brief one, coming on stage to give the audience a thumbs up before exiting a moment later.

A surreal moment amongst an already mad weekend. Walked to the top of the [@glastonbury](#) hill for a sunset photo, turns out Paul McCartney had the same idea! [#lovehim](#) [#icon](#) [#legend](#)
pic.twitter.com/K7b6R7hkGt

— Chris Arnold (@ChrisArnoldInc) [June 24, 2023](#)

Foo Fighters revealed as 'mystery' act

Many had speculated that the mystery band billed to perform at the Pyramid stage on Friday afternoon would be Foo Fighters, and the rumour was confirmed to be true when the American rock band, led by Dave Grohl, [emerged on stage to rapturous applause](#).

"You guys fucking knew it was us this whole time, didn't you?" Grohl said, before performing hits including All My Life and My Hero. "We're happy to see you guys. It's nice to see you guys after all this time," he said.

Security escort Del Rey off stage

Lana Del Rey's headline performance at the Other stage on Saturday night was certainly memorable. After the singer-songwriter took to the stage more than 30 minutes late, she apologised to fans: "I'm sorry. My hair takes so long."

Rey was also seen vaping between songs, and was later joined by her stylist, who finished the singer's hairdo on stage. Her set was then [dramatically cut short at midnight](#) when her microphone was cut off, and she was seen arguing with the stage's management about whether she would be able to

finish the eight songs remaining on her setlist. Del Rey then performed Video Games a cappella before being escorted off stage by security.

Crowd comes to Capaldi's aid

Off the back of cancelling all of his scheduled performances for mental health reasons in the run-up to the festival, there was speculation whether Lewis Capaldi [would be able to finish his set](#).

The Scottish singer was noticeably affected by tics as a result of Tourette's syndrome. He admitted that he was struggling, saying: "I'm really sorry. I hope the Eavises will have me back on, even though it's been a bit of a shit show."

During his biggest hit, Someone You Loved, the 100,000-strong crowd took over the song as his voice broke. It left Capaldi visibly emotional.

We love you Lewis Capaldi ♥

Glastonbury crowds are the best. pic.twitter.com/x6ZnIIgRpP

— BBC Radio 1 (@BBCR1) [June 24, 2023](#)

Astley's Harry Styles and AC/DC covers

Clad in a salmon-pink suit, Rick Astley's lunchtime performance on the Pyramid stage on Saturday was full of energy.

There was something for everyone in his Glastonbury debut, with the veteran pop star playing his 80s classics including Never Gonna Give You Up, a cover of Highway to Hell by AC/DC during which he showed off his drumming skills, and his own rendition of Harry Styles' hit single As It Was.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2023/jun/25/glastonbury-festival-2023-memorable-moments-lewis-capaldi-lana-del-rey>.

2023.06.26 - Opinion

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‘Kemi Badenoch requested a snap Ofsted inspection, on the basis of ‘a teacher acting inappropriately regarding her pupils’ beliefs about sex, gender and a fellow pupil who claimed to identify as a cat’.’ Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

[OpinionPolitics](#)

It doesn't matter if a girl identified as a cat (she didn't). The issue is how post-truth politics exploits it

[Nesrine Malik](#)



We pay a high price for the rows and divisions created by the right and its media allies to distract from their failings

Mon 26 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 04.15 EDT

I apologise in advance, because this column is about something that didn't happen. Too much is actually happening in the world that deserves our attention, but in this instance, it's worth pausing, and then tracing, how fiction becomes fact.

By now, you may have heard that a girl in a school in Rye in East Sussex said she was a cat, that she "identified" as such, and that others who disagreed with her were chastised by a teacher. If you have come across this story, you would be entirely forgiven for thinking it was real. "Catgirl: today's culture of affirmation is failing children," [wailed](#) the Telegraph. Nick Ferrari on LBC hosted a whole phone-in [segment](#) about the story. The Mail [unveiled an "investigation"](#) that revealed this was not an isolated incident, but part of a larger phenomenon where children are identifying as cats, dogs, dinosaurs and "furries".

You may have a good nose for nonsense, and may have thought that this story sounded wildly implausible, but even that would not have saved you from eventually having to consider it to be true. Because before long, the leader of the opposition, a minister of the crown and our prime minister himself had, as per the customary terminology for such controversies, “waded in”. A spokesperson for Keir Starmer [said](#): “I think children should be told to identify as children.” Downing Street issued a statement to the Telegraph. Kemi Badenoch [requested](#) a snap Ofsted inspection, on the [basis](#) that a recording was circulating of “a teacher acting inappropriately regarding her pupils’ beliefs about sex, gender and a fellow pupil who claimed to identify as a cat”.

Let’s get the facts out of the way first. At no point did anyone identify as a cat. A short exchange between schoolgirls and a teacher was recorded by one of the girls and then posted on TikTok, after which it went viral, was picked up by Fox News and the rightwing press, and then blessed into respectability by mainstream media and politicians. It was a heated debate, during which one of the girls cited a conversation with another girl about identifying as something other than a girl, such as a cat. “I said, how can you identify as a cat when you are a girl.” She is scolded by the teacher, whose tone and language definitely to my ears from the short recording sounded troubling, and the wrong approach to such discussions. But no one ever identified as a cat, or was criticised for doing so.

But it doesn’t matter. Because it’s too late. Once these accounts are reported wrongly in the public domain there is an entire ecosystem that is built to amplify them and in doing so, keep whatever the moral panic of the day is in the headlines. They are usually on vexatious, complicated subjects, around which feelings run high. And so even if it turns out they are not entirely true in their *detail*, people can dismiss that on the technicality that they are true in their *essence*.

But how we report such matters is linked to how we respond to them. News as simply high-pitch bad vibes will trigger high-pitch bad responses. This time it was about transgenderism. But it is, and has been for a long time, about a number of other threats that we are relentlessly sold.

Cat child didn't happen, just as Rule, Britannia! and Land of Hope and Glory were not axed from what was described as the BBC's "Black Lives Matter Proms". Nor was Cambridge University "[forced to drop white authors](#)", or a Muslim bus driver [allowed](#) to throw his passengers out so he could pray, or an Iraqi caught "red-handed" with a bomb awarded thousands of pounds in [compensation](#) for being kept in custody too long.

I could go on, but there simply isn't enough space. There was enough in all these examples for them to withstand a cursory look, for them to be regarded in the final fact count as perhaps not technically true, but true enough essentially.

The problem isn't anything as trite as an epidemic of "fake news". Half-truths and full lies are more concerned with diverting political consciousness and consumption to the trenches of identity and lifestyle preoccupation, and away from more critical areas such as the political and economic decisions relating to our standard of living, and even the very education system that troubles the media because of a nonexistent cat child. That very same system faces the crises of poor recruitment and teachers quitting in high numbers due to low pay, high workloads, and the fact that social care, special needs and mental healthcare resources are all but vanishing.

It helps that these stories are cheap to produce. They are mostly recycled copy and skimming the froth from social media. It helps that they sell well: fear always has a hot market.

And all this diversion and drama suits our politicians. Boris Johnson, as prime minister, jumping on a rightwing crowd-pleasing story about the BBC, declared "we are not embarrassed to sing Rule, Britannia!". The facts are not what matters as the bandwagon rolls: all that matters is how the situation is used to advance an image, to reap political advantage, to shape a national mood.

But the costs of this are high. Not just to our ability to negotiate inevitable changes and accommodations needed in a modern, compassionate society, but to the people at the heart of these distortions and fabrications –

immigrants, racial and sexual minorities, disabled [benefit claimants](#). They are caught in the bandwagon spokes: mangled and traduced.

[Sarah Lyall](#), who once covered London for the New York Times, described the Daily Mail's unofficial motto as "[What fresh hell is this?](#)", and that aptly describes how we are primed to react with hostility to those who do not conform to a strict identity and economic profile. You must not need, you must not be different, you must not imagine or demand new ways of being, all while being reassured that we are out of the woods, that Britain is in fact, an exceptionally tolerant and liberal place.

Which it is, when it is allowed and encouraged to be. When it's not, that paradise of tolerance may, to some, seem to be all around, but to others it's constantly just out of reach. That state calls to mind the anguish of Mephistopheles, Satan's emissary to Doctor Faustus, when he is asked how he can be damned when he is on Earth. "Why, this is hell," he says. "Nor am I out of it." Nor are we. But we could be. Which is why it's important to learn about the things that never happened.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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‘For the first time in 23 years, many Russians will have woken up on Saturday morning wondering whether Vladimir Putin was still in control.’ The Russian president addresses the nation. Photograph: Pavel Bednyakov/AP

[Opinion Vladimir Putin](#)

**In the face of mutiny, humiliated Putin
didn't know what to do. We should
worry about what he'll do next**

[Samantha de BERN](#)



The Russian leader, having faltered, is likely to renew his assault on Ukraine and impose repression at home with even greater intensity

Mon 26 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 05.47 EDT

When something incomprehensible happens, it can be reassuring to fall back on old clichés. Churchill’s famous description of Russia as “[a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma](#),” summarises what many Russia analysts feel after the [aborted armed rebellion](#) led by Wagner commander Yevgeny Prigozhin this weekend. While answers remain elusive, some elements seem important to help navigate through the fog.

There are powerful arguments that Vladimir Putin has been weakened by Prigozhin’s armed rebellion. For the first time in 23 years, many Russians will have woken up on Saturday morning wondering whether their president was still in control. Then, hours after a visibly shaken Putin announced that [traitors would be punished](#), charges against Prigozhin [were dropped](#), and his armed men, who allegedly shot down a transport plane and at least two helicopters (the exact number is still unconfirmed), killing a number of highly skilled military pilots, were given security guarantees.

This indicates that Putin had to make concessions to Prigozhin, and in a country where a social media post criticising the army carries a potential prison sentence, the gap between the rich and powerful and ordinary citizens has been unashamedly confirmed in full public view. The Russian army, which has stagnated on the Ukrainian front for months, was unable – or unwilling – to stop Wagner’s advance through swathes of Russian territory.

Putin’s unspoken contract with the Russian people is that in exchange for democratic freedoms he gives them stability and security. This contract has been broken. In a democracy all of the above would spell political death. But Russia is neither a democracy nor a functioning state. The only way to make sense of what happened in the past few days is to view events through the prism of a feud between criminal gangs in which each mafia boss holds so much leverage over the other that the balance of power can easily tip either way. The fact that Prigozhin is still alive indicates that whatever he holds over Putin is so damaging, and so well protected by unseen allies, that it is safer for Putin to allow him to live – for now.

In the days leading to Wagner’s rebellion, Prigozhin multiplied his harangues against the defence establishment, but was careful to spare Putin. After the president’s address to the nation, in which he firmly came down on the side of the military, Prigozhin’s gloves came off. This suggests that until the last minute Prigozhin was unsure who Putin would back and that he expected political support from the top. This never materialised, either from politicians or top army brass. This is a defeat for Prigozhin. Moreover, his escapade smoked out any traitors in Putin’s entourage. In this sense, Putin comes out stronger in the short term.

Wagner boss is cheered as he leaves Russian city of Rostov-on-Don – video

There are two factors Putin will have to contend with if he is to consolidate this small victory.

In a dictatorship that likes to pretend to be a democracy, the fractures within the regime that this rebellion revealed will have to be dealt with through tighter repression and even more control of the media. A whipping up of patriotic frenzy and a few – preferably foreign – scapegoats would wrap

things up nicely. Prigozhin's 25,000 men, who were prepared to march against the regular army, will also need to be managed.

Add to these the approximately 32,000 demobilised ex-Wagner troops who were put on standby through Prigozhin's networks when the rebellion began, and the Russian state now has to deal with close to 60,000 angry men with combat experience, some of whom are still armed and most of whom have criminal backgrounds. Some, particularly those who feel betrayed by Prigozhin, may be lured into the regular army. The others will pose a threat to the social order unless they are brought under control through fear or violence. The future looks bleak.

At the time of writing, Wagner posters are being torn down throughout Russia. But the fact that Prigozhin is still alive suggests he still has a role to play. In Belarus, he will be safely out of Putin's way but close enough to be of use. It is unlikely that Alexander Lukashenko, the Belarusian dictator, played a significant role in the deal cut between Prigozhin and Putin. Russian sources argue that [Aleksey Dyumin](#), the governor of Tula oblast where Prigozhin's army stopped, and Nikolai Patrushev, the powerful head of the Russian security council, were the [chief negotiators](#). Dyumin is a former Putin bodyguard and viewed by many as a potential successor to Putin who incarnates loyalty, youth and fresh blood.

Lukashenko will have obediently done what his master ordered as the frontman for the negotiations, thus preserving Putin and his protege from being tainted by association with Prigozhin. If he really does end up in Belarus, Prigozhin may be the catalyst to finally drag Belarusian men into the war without Lukashenko having to send his regular army, something he has resisted in spite of pressure from Putin. Imagine a Wagner group re-registered in Minsk, able to recruit Belarusian convicts or otherwise coerce Belarusian men into the war. The number of men may not be enough to make serious incursions into [Ukraine](#) but would force the Ukrainians to reinforce their northern border, thus taking away men from the frontlines in the east and south.

While a successful rebellion would have served Ukraine, at least in the short term, it is now likely that a humiliated but rebooted Putin will renew attacks

with more intensity.

If round one of Prigozhin v the Russian establishment went to Prigozhin on Saturday morning, Putin had made a comeback by the afternoon. Dog eats dog but while they hold each other by the tail, neither has a clear advantage. Either way, Ukraine will need even more western support as Russia teeters on the brink between chaos and absolute dictatorship.

- Samantha de BERNIERE is an associate fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House and a political commentator on LCI television in France

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‘AI technologies could support doctors, nurses and other health professionals to improve their knowledge and combine their expertise.’

Illustration: Deena So’Oteh/The Guardian

[Living with AI](#) Artificial intelligence (AI).

AI-powered personalised medicine could revolutionise healthcare (and no, we’re not putting ChatGPT in charge)

[Mihaela van der Schaar](#)

Artificial intelligence can’t replace human professionals but it could transform the way they treat diseases such as cancer, and save lives

- Mihaela van der Schaar is director of the Cambridge Centre for AI in Medicine at the University of Cambridge

Mon 26 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 28 Jun 2023 10.36 EDT

From the soaring costs of US healthcare to the [recurrent NHS crisis](#), it can often seem that effective *and* affordable healthcare is impossible. This will only get worse as chronic conditions grow in prevalence and we discover new ways to treat previously fatal diseases. These new treatments tend to be costly, while new approaches can be hard to introduce into healthcare systems that are either resistant to change or fatigued by too much of it. Meanwhile, growing demand for social care is compounding funding pressure and making the allocation of resources even more complicated.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is often glibly posed as the answer for services that are already forced to do more with less. Yet the idea that intelligent computers could simply replace humans in medicine is a fantasy. AI tends not to work well in the real world. Complexity proves an obstacle. So far, AI technologies have had little impact on the messy, inherently human world of medicine. But what if AI tools were designed specifically for real-world medicine – with all its organisational, scientific, and economic complexity?

This “reality-centric” approach to AI is the focus of the lab I lead at Cambridge University. Working closely with clinicians and hospitals, we develop AI tools for researchers, doctors, nurses and patients. People often think the principal opportunities for AI in healthcare lie in analysing images, such as MRI scans, or finding new drug compounds. But there are many opportunities beyond. One of the things our lab studies is personalised or precision medicine. Rather than one-size-fits-all, we look to see how treatments can be customised to reflect an individual’s unique medical and lifestyle profile.

Using AI-powered personalised medicine could allow for more effective treatment of common conditions such as heart disease and cancer, or rare diseases such as cystic fibrosis. It could allow clinicians to optimise the timing and dosage of medication for individual patients, or screen patients using their individual health profiles, rather than the current blanket criteria of age and sex. This personalised approach could lead to earlier diagnosis, prevention and better treatment, saving lives and making better use of resources.

Many of these same techniques can be applied in clinical trials. Trials sometimes falter because the *average* response to a drug fails to meet the trial's targets. If some people on the trial responded well to treatment, though, AI could help to find those groups within the existing trial data. Creating data models of individual patients, or "[digital twins](#)", could allow researchers to conduct preliminary trials before embarking on an expensive one involving real people. This would reduce the time and investment it takes to create a drug, making more life-enhancing interventions commercially viable and allowing treatments to be targeted at those they will help the most.

In a complex organisation such as the NHS, AI could help to allocate resources efficiently. Our lab created a [tool during Covid](#) to help clinicians predict the use of ventilators and ICU beds. This could be extended across the health service to allocate healthcare staff and equipment. AI technologies could also support doctors, nurses and other health professionals to improve their knowledge and combine their expertise. It could also help with conundrums such as patient privacy. The latest AI technologies create what is called "[synthetic data](#)", which reflects the patterns within data, allowing clinicians to draw insights from this, while replacing all identifiable information.

Clinicians and AI specialists are already considering the potential for healthcare of large language models such as ChatGPT. These tools could help with the paperwork burden, recommend drug-trial protocols or propose diagnoses. But although they have immense potential, the risks and challenges are clear. We can't rely on a system that regularly [fabricates information](#), or that is trained on biased data. ChatGPT is not capable of understanding complex conditions and nuances, which could lead to misinterpretations or inappropriate recommendations. It could have disastrous implications if it was used in fields such as mental health.

If AI is used to diagnose someone and gets it wrong, it needs to be clear who is responsible: the AI developers, or the healthcare professionals who use it? Ethical guidelines and regulations have yet to catch up with these technologies. We need to address the safety issues around using large language models with real patients, and make sure that AI is developed and

deployed responsibly. To ensure this, our lab is working closely with clinicians to make sure that models are trained on reliably accurate and unbiased data. We're developing new ways to validate AI systems to ensure they're safe, reliable and effective, and techniques to make sure the predictions and recommendations generated by AI can be explained to clinicians and patients.

We must not lose sight of the transformative potential of this technology. We need to make sure that we design and build AI to help healthcare professionals be better at what they do. This is part of what I call the human AI empowerment agenda – using AI to empower humans, not to replace them. The aim should not be to construct autonomous agents that can mimic and supplant humans, but to develop machine learning that allows humans to improve their cognitive and introspective abilities, enabling them to become better learners and decision-makers.

- Mihaela van der Schaar is the John Humphrey Plummer professor for machine learning, AI and medicine, and director of the Cambridge Centre for AI in Medicine at the University of Cambridge

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Screengrab from HBO trailer of documentary The Case Against Adnan Syed. The murder of Hae Min Lee was a case brought to global attention by the Serial podcast. Photograph: HBO, The Case Against Adnan Syed (2019) Official Trailer

[Why I quit True crime \(Podcasts\)](#)

I found comfort in grisly true crime stories. Giving them up brought me peace

[Mollie Goodfellow](#)



It's hard to admit, but I was using others' tragedies as a way of protecting myself. Then a merchandising ad stopped me short

Mon 26 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 04.13 EDT

I vividly remember being a child, sitting on the edge of my parents' bed late in the evening, and watching Crimewatch. Reconstructions of violent crimes I didn't understand, usually against women, played out on screen. I remember sombre presenters such as Nick Ross and Kirsty Young pleading for information as grainy CCTV footage showed victims being followed through the streets at night, and dour police detectives talking through timelines of the hours before someone was killed.

This fascination with the morbid flowed easily into horror movies. After finishing school, I had my first major depressive episode, involving a hospital stay. It took a while for me to get back to myself; I didn't really leave the house apart from to go to therapy, and I soon became a strange nocturnal hermit. During the day I would sleep, and at night I would lie in bed and watch scary movies where horrible things happened to female actors, fake-slaughtered in buckets of corn syrup.

It kind of made sense, then, that in the big true crime boom of 2014 – when Serial, the podcast that [reinvigorated the genre](#), was released – I climbed wholly on board. Documentaries, podcasts, long reads, YouTubers – I couldn't stop consuming content about horrible, grotesque crimes.

I am loth to start a sentence with “as a woman”, but since puberty I, along with most of my peers, have experienced quite a few unpleasant things at the hands of other people. It's highly likely that most of us know at least one woman who has been the victim of sexual assault, domestic abuse or other gendered violence – and the true crime genre has thrived on this.

The more I processed some of the things I'd been through, the more I took refuge, weirdly, in true crime content. I found it oddly comforting to listen to some of the grimmer stories of [murdered women](#). I'd spend afternoons lying in bed catching up on my favourite crime podcasts as a twisted form of self-care, with overly eager presenters trying to toe the line of respectfully sharing the tragic circumstances of someone's untimely death while not seeming too playful.

If Netflix had a new documentary out, I would be on it, bingeing episodes in quick succession. My sick little mind would scroll endlessly through Reddit threads, unpicking the great mysteries of the true crime world, like the murders of [JonBenét Ramsey](#) and [Meredith Kercher](#). True crime had become my hobby.

For years, I used true crime as a crutch to position some of the worst things I'd been through in a wider context. But it was never enough – I was always searching for more: more podcasts, more news, more documentaries. A few years ago I tried a new podcast. It had the usual premise – two peppy American women covering the story of a murdered or missing woman for about an hour. I enjoyed it for a while and then, part of the way through, when they would usually play an ad for a completely unrelated item that they would try to make relevant (“Does hearing the topics covered in this podcast keep you awake at night? You should try this new mattress, for a perfect night's sleep”, etc), they started gleefully plugging their own merch. T-shirts and jumpers for their fellow crime junkies. Like me.

I was disgusted. It's slightly shameful that this, of all things, was what turned me off true crime, but my stomach was turned by the idea of these two women monetising the content I had been so hungry for. From then on, I went pretty much cold turkey. Podcast episodes that automatically downloaded on to the app went unlistened to. I no longer wanted to hear it. I wish I could say I had taken a principled stance in no longer listening – but it was more like a trigger word in the ad had lifted a spell I'd been under for so many years. Suddenly, I no longer found an uncomfortable comfort in digesting other people's horror stories.

Many months later, the domino effect of the highly publicised murders of [Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry](#), [Sarah Everard](#) and [Sabina Nessa](#) made me feel and think about things I'd gone through differently. I felt ashamed of the way I'd been sucked in by the cult of true crime, which uses painful events such as these as fodder. I had relied on the painful experiences of others as a sort of numbing cream, a buffer I could put between me and my experiences. Letting go of true crime allowed me to let go of my own things – and finally find some peace.

- Mollie Goodfellow is a freelance journalist and comedy writer
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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2023.06.26 - Around the world

- ['We can't rest or relent' Pence reiterates support of staunch abortion restrictions](#)
- [Barack Obama Remarks on India's treatment of Muslims 'hypocritical', says minister](#)
- [US Man flies 23m miles with lifetime United Airlines pass 'like a sultan'](#)
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Republican presidential candidate and former vice-president Mike Pence speaks during a Celebrate Life Day rally outside the Lincoln Memorial, on Saturday, in Washington. Photograph: Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images

[Mike Pence](#)

‘We can’t rest or relent’: Pence reiterates support of staunch abortion restrictions

Former vice-president hails Dobbs decision as ‘historic victory’ but says it didn’t go far enough and urges a nationwide abortion ban

[Ramon Antonio Vargas](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 11.20 EDT

Despite their unpopularity with the American public, former Republican vice-president and 2024 White House hopeful [Mike Pence](#) doubled down on Sunday on his hardline support of staunch abortion restrictions, saying: “We just can’t rest or relent until we restore the sanctity of life.”

Pence – in an interview on Fox News Sunday – made clear that he viewed bringing the elimination of abortion “to the center of American law” as both essential and “a winning issue” for the Republican party trying to wrest back control of the Oval Office.

“I’m pro-life, and I don’t apologize for it,” Pence boasted to host Shannon Bream, even though polling shows most Americans favor keeping the termination of pregnancies legal in most cases.

The Dobbs v Jackson Women’s [Health](#) Organization ruling that the US supreme court handed down one year ago on Saturday in effect left it up to states to decide whether abortion should be legal within their boundaries. Many states have taken steps to severely limit access to abortion, setting off a seismic shift in how doctors are training to provide reproductive care to how far patients in need of attention must travel.

Pence on Sunday hailed the Dobbs decision as “a historic victory” which sent the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling establishing federal abortion rights “to the ash heap of history”. But he also suggested it didn’t go far enough and reiterated [a call](#) he had publicly made days earlier for his fellow Republicans to rally behind setting “a minimum standard” and implementing a nationwide ban on abortions beyond 15 weeks.

The former US congressman, Indiana governor and vice-president to [Donald Trump](#) argued that failing to do so would leave the nation more closely aligned with “western countries in Europe” on the topic of abortion than with North Korea, China and Iran. “I fully support that,” said Pence, a professed evangelical.

Pence’s beliefs on abortion put him at stark odds with Trump, who has [signaled](#) that he regards a national abortion ban as a vote-loser which he is unlikely to support.

Many of the other declared candidates for the Republican nomination to challenge Democratic presidential incumbent Joe Biden’s re-election campaign have been less frank about their positions on abortion.

Notably, the Florida governor, Ron DeSantis – the closest challenger to the frontrunner Trump – signed a six-week ban in his state, which pundits predict could be a problem for him in a general showdown with Biden.

Biden's administration has taken steps to widen access to abortion, and promises to defend such procedures helped Democrats keep a majority in the Senate as well as lose fewer House seats than projected during last year's midterms.

Pence on Sunday also evaded answering whether he would consider pardoning Trump if he won the 2024 presidency and his ex-boss was convicted of criminal charges pending against him.

"I don't know why the other people running for president in the Republican primary assume that the president will be found guilty," Pence said when asked if he would pardon Trump.

Trump is facing federal [charges](#) that he improperly stored government secrets at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida after he and Pence were defeated by the Biden-Kamala Harris ticket in 2020.

Separately, he is also facing state charges in New York over hush money payments made to the adult film star Stormy Daniels after a sexual encounter that she has described having with Trump. Presidential pardons would not apply to state charges.

The ex-president has pleaded not guilty to all charges against him.

Trump's presidency ended with his supporters attacking the US Capitol on 6 January 2021 and demanding – among other things – Pence's execution by hanging. At the time of the attack, the pro-mob Trump incorrectly maintained that Pence could have used his ceremonial role at a joint session of Congress certifying the results of the 2020 election to single-handedly undermine Biden's victory.

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Barack Obama had told CNN during Narendra Modi's state visit to the US that Joe Biden should raise the issue of the protection of the Muslim minority in India. Photograph: Alexander Beltes/EPA

[India](#)

Obama remarks on India's treatment of Muslims 'hypocritical' – minister

Indian finance minister hits out after former US president said Modi government should protect rights of Muslims

Reuters in Delhi

Mon 26 Jun 2023 04.39 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 21.31 EDT

India's finance minister has derided comments by the former US president Barack Obama that Narendra Modi's government should protect the rights of minority Muslims, accusing Obama of being hypocritical.

During the [Indian prime minister's state visit to the US](#) last week, Obama told CNN that the issue of the "[protection of the Muslim minority](#)" in a

majority-Hindu India” would be worth raising in Modi’s meeting with the US president, Joe Biden.

Joe Biden and Narendra Modi quizzed on human rights in India during US visit – video

Obama said that without such protection there was “a strong possibility that [India](#) at some point starts pulling apart“.

The Indian finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, said she was shocked Obama had made such remarks when Modi was visiting the US aiming to deepen relations.

“He was commenting on Indian Muslims ... having bombed Muslim-majority countries from Syria to Yemen ... during his presidency,” Sitharaman told a press conference on Sunday. “Why would anyone listen to any allegations from such people?”

The US state department has raised concerns over treatment of Muslims and other religious minorities in India under Modi’s Hindu-nationalist party. The Indian government says it treats all citizens equally.

Biden said he discussed human rights and other democratic values with Modi during their talks in the White House.

Modi, at a press conference with Biden last week, denied any discrimination against minorities under his government.

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In 2019 alone, Tom Stuker flew 1.46m miles, which would have cost him \$2.44m had he not used his lifetime pass. Photograph: Eduardo Muñoz/Reuters

[Travel](#)

New Jersey man flies 23m miles with lifetime United pass ‘like a sultan’

Since paying \$290,000 for the ‘best investment’ of his life in 1990, Tom Stuker was flown more miles than the Apollo 11 moon trip

[Adam Gabbatt](#)
[@adamgabbatt](#)

Sun 25 Jun 2023 14.29 EDTLast modified on Sun 25 Jun 2023 23.09 EDT

A [US](#) man who bought a lifetime pass from United Airlines three decades ago has “lived like a sultan” ever since, according to a report, flying multiples of miles more than the Apollo 11 spacecraft in the process.

Tom Stuker, from New Jersey, paid \$290,000 for the pass in 1990, according to the [Washington Post](#), a decision he said is the “best investment of my life”.

In the 33 years since then, Stuker, 69, has flown more than 23m miles (37m km) – Apollo 11, which carried Neil Armstrong and his fellow astronauts to the moon, clocked a mere 953,000 miles (1.5m km) – and visited more than 100 countries.

Stuker’s mileage in 2019 alone “covered more than six trips to the moon”, the Post reported. That year Stuker took 373 flights, covering 1.46m miles. Had he paid cash for the flights, it would have cost \$2.44m.

The real boon, however, appears to have been the frequent flier miles that Stuker has accrued along the way. In 2009 Stuker passed the 5m mile (8m km) mark, [according to Simple Flying](#), passing the 10m mile mark in 2019.

He was the first [United Airlines](#) customer to do so, and the points have opened all kinds of doors.

“Stuker has lived like a sultan on United miles ever since – lavish hotel suites all over the world, weeks-long Crystal cruises, gourmet meals from Perth to Paris,” said the Post report, written by famed US sportswriter Rick Reilly.

He has also used the miles to “redo his brother’s house”, the Post said, and “once cashed \$50,000 worth of Walmart gift cards in a single day”. Stuker also won a charity auction to appear in a Seinfeld episode by bidding 451,000 air miles.

There have also been some less enjoyable moments. He has witnessed four people die during his decades of flying, which Simple Flying calculated to be between “200 and 250 days a year in the air” before the Covid-19 pandemic slowed worldwide travel.

“All heart attacks,” Stuker told the Post. “I’d met a couple of them, too. Just died right in their seats. The last guy was up in business with me, Chicago to

Narita [Tokyo]. They covered him with a blanket and put the seat belt back on.

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“What else could they do? I guarantee somebody in business was thinking: ‘Hey, if he’s not gonna eat his chocolate sundae, would you mind ... ?’”

Still, Stuker seems set on continuing flying. He and his wife have been on “more than 120 honeymoons”, according to the Post. As for the environmental impact, Stuker seemed unfazed in [an interview with GQ](#) in 2020.

“I’m not adding to the footprint,” Stuker said. “The plane is going to fly whether I’m on it or not. It would be much more relevant if I was flying in a private jet. Those are the people who can help the environment much more than I can if they flew commercial.”

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A Russian official leaves the partially built new embassy near Parliament House in Canberra. Russia has lost its initial high court bid to hold on to the site. Photograph: Yoann Cambefort/AFP/Getty Images

[Australian politics](#)

Russian squatter leaves Canberra embassy site after high court loss

Judge suggests Russia's case against federal laws cancelling lease appears 'weak and difficult to understand'

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[*Christopher Knaus*](#)
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Sun 25 Jun 2023 23.04 EDTFirst published on Sun 25 Jun 2023 21.41 EDT

Australia's high court has dismissed Russia's attempt to temporarily hold on to the site of its proposed new embassy in [Canberra](#), describing its challenge to laws cancelling the lease as "weak" and "hard to understand".

An hour after the ruling, a Russian official [who had been squatting on the Yarralumla site](#) left in a diplomatic vehicle. He didn't say anything to waiting reporters.

Russia had on Monday morning launched an urgent application to temporarily prevent the Australian government from entering the site of its new embassy, while the court hears the main constitutional challenge against the federal legislation.

Russia expressed fears that the integrity of the partially completed embassy building, on which it has spent US\$5.5m (A\$8.2m) already, would be compromised if Australia was allowed on to the block.

The loss of integrity to the building could force Russia to demolish the structure if it was successful in its high court challenge and was later allowed to hold on to the lease, it argued.

Russia's lawyers also told the high court that its continued possession of the land posed no security risk or otherwise prejudiced the Australian public.

In doing so, it pointed to the words of the prime minister, Anthony Albanese, who said last week that [he had no concern about a lone Russian man](#) squatting on the land, describing him as "some bloke standing on a blade of grass".

"The stated position of the prime minister is that the security personnel of my client who is on the land ... is not seemingly a risk," Russia's counsel Elliot Hyde told the high court on Monday.

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But Tim Begbie KC, acting for the commonwealth, said Russia had failed to demonstrate that its constitutional challenge to [laws passed earlier this month](#), stripping Russia of the lease, was compelling.

“Once that is accepted, their whole argument is over,” he said.

Justice Jayne Jagot agreed. She said Russia’s constitutional challenge against the laws appeared to be weak and difficult to comprehend.

Her evaluation of the case was that it was “weak, indeed, as I have said, often difficult to understand”. “There is no proper foundation for granting the interlocutory injunction as sought by the [Russian Federation],” she said.

Jagot described Russia’s suggestion that there could be some loss of integrity to the building as “too vague and nebulous”.

“There is no meaningful evidence to explain why the [Russian Federation] takes the view that it would have to destroy the buildings,” she said.

The federal government in mid-June passed legislation to cancel Russia’s lease, citing national security concerns over its proximity to parliament.

On Monday, Begbie told the high court that Australia had offered to not release the site while the constitutional challenge was heard.

Begbie said he had written to Russia’s lawyers on Saturday to make the offer but had heard no response.

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In an apparent reference to [the Wagner mutiny in Russia](#) over the weekend, he said: “I do not criticise my friend for not responding to this letter. Russia has had other things on its mind over the weekend.”

Begbie argued that Russia’s challenge to the Albanese government’s laws cancelling the lease was weak. “It’s not just that they haven’t made a compelling case for constitutional validity, they’ve made absolutely no case,” he said.

Last year, the National Capital Authority attempted to cancel the lease on planning grounds, saying Russia had not progressed with works despite holding the site since 2007.

That prompted a separate case in the federal court, which settled this year. As part of that settlement, the commonwealth consented to orders that Russia be allowed to maintain possession of the site.

Hyde, acting for Russia, argued that there had been no explanation for the commonwealth’s sudden change in position.

But Jagot said the changed circumstances related to the laws passed this month, in which the federal parliament demonstrated its desire to strip the Russian government of the site.

Speaking on Monday afternoon just before the squatter left the site, Albanese said the court had made clear there was no legal basis for a Russian presence to continue “and we expect the Russian Federation to act in accordance with the court’s ruling”. The prime minister added he didn’t envisage any diplomatic mission for any country being built on the site in the future.

Here's the diplomatic vehicle as it carried the squatter away from the site. The white mini van remains idling just next to the perimeter fence of the partially completed building. pic.twitter.com/jglsQY73Vg

— Christopher Knaus (@knausc) [June 26, 2023](#)

It is currently unclear when the high court might hear Russia's full constitutional challenge to the federal laws.

The Russian government maintains a diplomatic presence at its existing embassy in the Canberra suburb of Griffith.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2023/jun/26/russia-loses-initial-high-court-bid-to-hold-onto-embassy-site-in-canberra>



Smoke rises over Khartoum, Sudan. The Rapid Support Forces claims to have captured a key police base in Khartoum Photograph: AP

[Sudan](#)

Sudan paramilitary force reportedly makes gains in Khartoum as fighting surges

The Rapid Support Forces says it has seized a key police base and captured a large amount of military equipment

Reuters

Sun 25 Jun 2023 21.37 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 21.31 EDT

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) says it has seized the main base of a heavily armed police unit and captured a large amount of military equipment, during heavy fighting against the army in the capital Khartoum.

In a statement on Sunday, the RSF said it had taken full control of the large base belonging to the Central Reserve Police southern Khartoum and posted

footage of its fighters celebrating inside the facility, some removing boxes of ammunition from a warehouse.

It later said it had captured 160 pickup trucks, 75 armoured personnel carriers, and 27 tanks. The Reuters news agency was not immediately able to verify the footage or the RSF statements. There was no immediate comment from the army or the police.

The Central Reserve Police has been deployed by the army in ground fighting in recent weeks. It had previously been used as a combat force in several regions and to confront protesters demonstrating against a coup in 2021. It was sanctioned last year by the United States, accused of using excessive force against protesters.

Since late on Saturday, fighting has surged in the three cities that make up the wider capital – Khartoum, Bahri and Omdurman – as the conflict between the army and the RSF entered its 11th week.

Witnesses also reported a sharp increase in violence in recent days in Nyala, the largest city in the western Darfur region. The UN raised the alarm on Saturday over ethnic targeting and the killing of people from the Masalit community in El Geneina in West Darfur.

Fighting has intensified since a [series of ceasefire deals agreed at talks led by the United States and Saudi Arabia](#) failed to stick. The talks were adjourned last week.

The army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, has been using airstrikes and heavy artillery to try to dislodge the RSF led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, from neighbourhoods across the capital.

In Nyala, a city that grew rapidly as people were displaced during the earlier conflict that spread in Darfur after 2003, witnesses reported a marked deterioration in the security situation over the past few days, with violent clashes in residential neighbourhoods. A human rights monitor said at least 25 civilians had been killed in Nyala since Tuesday.

There was also fighting between the army and the RSF last week around El Fashir, capital of North Darfur, which the UN says is inaccessible to humanitarian workers.

In El Geneina, which has been almost entirely cut off from communications networks and aid supplies in recent weeks, attacks by Arab militias and the RSF have sent tens of thousands fleeing over the border to Chad.

UN Human Rights spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani on Saturday called for safe passage for people fleeing El Geneina and access for aid workers after reports of summary executions between the city and the border and “persistent hate speech” including calls to kill the Masalit or expel them.

Of those uprooted by the conflict in Sudan, nearly 2 million have been displaced internally and almost 600,000 have fled to neighbouring countries, according to the International Organization for Migration.

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Headlines thursday 29 june 2023

- [Immigration Braverman plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda unlawful, appeal court rules](#)
- [Live Government's Rwanda deportations policy ruled unlawful](#)
- [Partygate Ex-ministers campaigned to undermine Johnson inquiry, says report](#)
- [France police shooting 150 arrests as protests widen over teenager's death](#)

Court of appeal rules government's Rwanda policy unlawful – video

[Immigration and asylum](#)

Braverman plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda unlawful, appeal court rules

Rishi Sunak announces government will seek supreme court appeal, but Labour says policy is unravelling after judges' decision

- [UK politics live – latest updates](#)

[Diane Taylor](#) and [Ben Quinn](#)

Thu 29 Jun 2023 09.31 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Jun 2023 05.09 EDT

Court of appeal judges have ruled that it is unlawful to send asylum seekers to [Rwanda](#) to have their claims processed, in a judgment that delivers a potential hammer blow to government policy.

Rishi Sunak said in a statement that the government would now seek permission to appeal against the decision at the supreme court as he insisted that [Rwanda](#) was a safe country and said that the court had agreed with this.

The ruling follows a four-day hearing in April against a high court [decision](#) last December that it was lawful to send some asylum seekers, including people arriving on small boats, to Rwanda to have their claims processed rather than dealing with their applications for sanctuary in the UK.

The court ruled that due to deficiencies in the Rwandan asylum system there was a real risk that people sent to Rwanda would be returned to their home countries, where they face persecution or other inhumane treatment, when in fact they had a good claim for asylum.

The court's conclusion was that Rwanda was not a "safe third country" even though assurances provided by the Rwandan government were provided in

good faith.

“While I respect the court, I fundamentally disagree with their conclusions,” Sunak said. “I strongly believe the Rwandan government has provided the assurances necessary to ensure there is no real risk that asylum seekers relocated under the Rwanda policy would be wrongly returned to third countries, something that the lord chief justice agrees with.”

He added: “The policy of this government is very simple: it is this country – and your government – who should decide who comes here, not criminal gangs. And I will do whatever is necessary to make that happen.”

The illegal migration bill, now passing through parliament, states that all asylum seekers arriving by “irregular means” could face being forcibly removed to Rwanda.

However, Labour claimed the government’s policy on so-called small boats crossing the Channel was now “completely unravelling”. The shadow home secretary, Yvette Cooper, said the Rwanda scheme was “unworkable, unethical and extortionate”.

The home secretary, [Suella Braverman](#), said she was disappointed by the ruling, adding: “The British people want to stop the boats, and so does this government. That’s what I am determined to deliver and I won’t take a backward step from that.”

Suella Braverman says she is committed to Rwanda plan despite court ruling – video

Lord Burnett, who heard the appeal with Sir Geoffrey Vos and Lord Justice Underhill, said the court had ruled by a majority that the policy of removing asylum seekers to Rwanda was unlawful, though he disagreed with the other two judges.

Those who supported the appeal against the ruling included the UN’s refugee agency UNHCR, lawyers, charities and a group of asylum seekers.

The court heard from UNHCR that Rwanda had a record of human rights abuses towards refugees within its borders, including refoulement – forced

removal to countries where they are at risk – expulsions and arbitrary detention. The refugee agency said the [Home Office](#) would not be able to guarantee the safety of asylum seekers who were deported to the east African country.

But Sir James Eadie KC, counsel for the home secretary, said she was confident that the government of Rwanda would abide by undertakings given in a memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries.

Ten asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, Sudan and Albania who arrived in the UK by irregular means, crossing the Channel in small boats, brought the case along with the charity Asylum Aid.

The key issue before the court was whether Rwanda was capable of delivering reliable outcomes on asylum claims and whether there was a risk that asylum seekers would be forcibly removed to their home countries after arriving in Rwanda, even if they had strong asylum claims.

The judges found that sending asylum seekers to Rwanda would be a breach of article 3 of the European convention on human rights.

The judges unanimously rejected other grounds of appeal in the case.

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A spokesperson for the government of Rwanda said: “While this is ultimately a decision for the UK’s judicial system, we do take issue with the ruling that Rwanda is not a safe country for asylum seekers and refugees.

“Rwanda is one of the safest countries in the world and we have been recognised by the UNHCR and other international institutions for our exemplary treatment of refugees.

“Rwanda remains fully committed to making this partnership work. The broken global migration system is failing to protect the vulnerable, and empowering criminal smuggling gangs at an immeasurable human cost. When the migrants do arrive, we will welcome them and provide them with the support they’ll need to build new lives in Rwanda.”

Despite both the UK and Rwandan government citing UNHCR’s endorsement of Rwanda as a safe haven for refugees, the refugee agency is implacably opposed to the scheme and believes there is a high risk of refoulement if or when refugees get to Rwanda.

UNHCR has endorsed Rwanda in very limited circumstances as a transit destination for refugees UNHCR has rescued from conditions of torture and trafficking in Libya. This group of refugees have been placed temporarily in Rwanda before UNHCR moves them on for resettlement in a safe third country.

Lawyers for the appellants and human rights campaigners welcomed the ruling.

Toufique Hossain of Duncan Lewis solicitors, who represented some of the appellants, said: “The home secretary’s ‘dream’ and ‘obsession’ is in tatters. The court of appeal has ruled by a majority that Rwanda is not a safe third country. We speak on behalf of all our deeply vulnerable clients in thanking the court for its decision.”

Enver Solomon, the chief executive of the Refugee Council, said: “We are relieved that the court of appeal has ruled that Rwanda is not a safe country

for people who claim asylum. However, we're disappointed that they have not concluded that the overall policy is unlawful."

The Law Society said the ruling called into question the government's whole illegal migration bill, which would place a legal duty on the government to detain and remove those arriving in the UK illegally, to Rwanda or another "safe" third country.

A large backlog of people due to be removed under the bill would increase, the society said, adding: "They will be left in limbo and could remain in detention or government-supported accommodation indefinitely."

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Jacob Rees-Mogg and Nadine Dorries – mounted ‘the most vociferous attacks ... from the platform of their own hosted TV shows’, the report said. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Partygate](#)

Ex-ministers campaigned to undermine Johnson Partygate inquiry, says report

Privileges committee says seven Tory MPs and three peers risked discrediting system of checks and balances in parliament

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[Aubrey Allegretti](#) *Senior political correspondent*
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Thu 29 Jun 2023 05.39 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Jun 2023 04.13 EDT

Former cabinet ministers and allies of [Boris Johnson](#) have been accused of launching an “unprecedented and coordinated” campaign to undermine the

inquiry into whether he misled parliament over Partygate.

The finding came in a new report by the privileges committee, which posed a fresh problem for Rishi Sunak as it recommended toughening up the rules on interference in such inquiries and condemned the behaviour of former ministers.

Seven Tory MPs and three peers – including a serving government minister – were named and told their behaviour risked discrediting a fundamental arm of the system of checks and balances in parliament.

The former cabinet ministers Nadine Dorries, Priti Patel and Jacob Rees-Mogg were named, as were other former frontbenchers Brendan Clarke-Smith, Mark Jenkinson, Andrea Jenkyns and Michael Fabricant.

Zac Goldsmith, a Foreign Office minister, and two other Tory peers – Lord Cruddas and Lord Greenhalgh – were similarly criticised.

Earlier this month, the privileges committee said it would write a special report on the issues it encountered during its 14-month inquiry into Johnson's [Partygate](#) denials. In its ruling, the committee found he had committed five contempts of parliament.

Its follow-up report, published on Thursday, said some senior Tories had waged a campaign across newspapers, radio and social media to discredit the committee's work and the seven MPs that serve on the cross-party group.

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They all tried to “undermine procedures of the House of Commons”, and two MPs in particular – Dorries and Rees-Mogg – were said to have mounted “the most vociferous attacks ... from the platform of their own hosted TV shows” on TalkTV and GB News respectively.

“Attacks by experienced members are all the more concerning as they would have known that during the course of an investigation it was not possible for the privileges committee to respond to the attacks,” the report said.

The four Tory members of the committee were particularly targeted, the committee said. It noted: “This had the clear intention to drive those members off the committee and so to frustrate the intention of the house that the inquiry should be carried out, or to prevent the inquiry coming to a conclusion which the critics did not want.

“It had significant personal impact on individual members and raised significant security concerns.”

If such abuse continued in future, no MPs would want to serve on the committee that investigates the most serious breaches of parliamentary rules, the report continued. “If that happens ... the house might feel compelled to cede to an external authority the responsibility for protection of its rights and privileges.”

Lord Cruddas and Lord Greenhalgh were found to have been among more than 600 people who emailed Tory members of the committee using a template devised by the Conservative Post website.

An article on the website inviting people to lobby the committee said that all four Tories should “step down” immediately to send a “strong message that we will not tolerate politically motivated attacks against our party”.

Thangam Debbonaire, the shadow leader of the Commons, told Sky News on Thursday that privileges committee members had been put under “intolerable pressure” from “atrocious comments” by fellow MPs.

Examples of such behaviour cited by the privileges committee included a tweet from Dorries calling it a “kangaroo court” that had “changed the rules” to suit its own narrative, and Rees-Mogg, who said it “makes kangaroo courts look respectable” and was a “political committee against Boris Johnson”.

Several of those named in the report hit back.

Clarke-Smith, who was appointed as an education minister in the overhauled government Johnson led after a series of mass resignations last July, said that he had never referred explicitly to the committee in his criticisms.

The tweet cited by Clarke-Smith on 9 June said Johnson quitting as an MP and partly leaking the results of the report on him was “the end result of a parliamentary witch-hunt which would put a banana republic to shame”.

In his defence, Clarke-Smith said he was “shocked and disappointed to be named in this new report” and said it raised “serious questions about free speech in a democratic society”.

Mark Jenkinson, a former whip, also said he had never referred to the committee before its final report was published. He said the tweet referenced by the committee, about a “witch-hunt”, also on 9 June, was about “the media”.

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Violent protests spread across France over police shooting of teenager – video

[France](#)

France police shooting: violence erupts for a third consecutive night

Police fire teargas at rioters as 6,000 march through Nanterre to protest against shooting of 17-year-old

[Angelique Chrisafis](#) and [Jon Henley](#) in Paris

Thu 29 Jun 2023 21.22 EDTFirst published on Wed 28 Jun 2023 21.49 EDT

Violence has erupted for a third consecutive night in France as [Emmanuel Macron](#) struggles to contain mounting anger after the fatal police shooting of a 17-year-old boy of north African descent during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb.

The officer concerned was charged with voluntary homicide on Thursday and placed in provisional detention in the capital as an estimated 6,000 people marched through the streets of Nanterre in memory of the teenager, identified as Nahel M.

Carrying placards reading “Justice for Nahel” and led by his mother, protesters chanted “No justice, no peace” and “Police kill”. While it began peacefully, the afternoon march descended into violence, with police firing teargas at masked youths.

Despite government appeals for calm and vows that order would be restored, smoke from burning cars, bins and a local bank branch later billowed over the suburb’s streets, while as the night advanced violent skirmishes between rioters and police also broke out in Lille, Toulouse, Marseille and Montpellier.

More than 100 people had been arrested on Thursday, according to interior minister Gérald Darmanin, who called for “support for our police, gendarmes and firefighters who are doing a brave job”.

In central Paris, Nike and Zara stores were vandalised and looted, Le Monde reported, with 14 arrests made. Further arrests were made after shop windows were smashed along the famous rue de Rivoli shopping street.

In Montreuil, an eastern suburb, hundreds of youths attacked shops including a pharmacy and a McDonalds, while bins were set on fire outside the town hall. Police fired teargas in response.

In the western city of Nantes, a car was driven into through the metal barriers of a Lidl store, which was subsequently also looted, Le Parisien reported.

In Vaulx-en-Velin, a suburb of Lyon, youths maintained a “constant and heavy barrage” of fireworks at police, local media reported, while a dozen cars were set alight in Sevrans, north-east of Paris.

At least 10 people were arrested in two Brussels neighbourhoods after rioting that police blamed on the shooting.

Several towns around Paris, including Clamart, Compiègne and Neuilly-sur-Marne imposed full or partial night-time curfews as a police intelligence report leaked to French media predicted “widespread urban violence over the coming nights”.

Darmanin said 40,000 police would be deployed across [France](#) on Thursday, nearly four times as many as the previous night, including 5,000 in the greater Paris region where bus and tram services halted at 9pm. Several other towns shut public transport networks early for fear of violence.

Officer who fatally shot teenager in Paris placed under investigation – video

The French president had held a morning crisis meeting with senior ministers after a second night of unrest and rioting across France in which public buildings were set on fire and cars torched in cities from Lille to Toulouse, as well as in the Paris suburbs.

“The last few hours have been marked by scenes of violence against police stations but also schools and town halls, and thus institutions of the republic – and these scenes are wholly unjustifiable,” Macron said.

The government is haunted by the possibility of a repeat of the weeks of sustained violent protest sparked by the death of [two young boys of African origin](#) during a police chase in 2005.

That incident, in Clichy-sous-Bois outside Paris, triggered weeks of unrest with France declaring a state of national emergency as more than 9,000 vehicles and dozens of public buildings and businesses were set on fire.

Darmanin said 180 arrests had been made after Wednesday’s riots. “The response of the state must be extremely firm,” he said. Both he and the prime minister, Élisabeth Borne, ruled out declaring a state of emergency for now.

On Thursday, Borne visited Garges-lès-Gonesse, north of Paris, where the mayor’s office was set on fire overnight amid rising public anger at police violence, particularly against young men from ethnic minorities, and allegations of systemic racism.

Pascal Prache, the local prosecutor, told journalists that investigating magistrates had placed the 38-year-old officer involved in the shooting under formal investigation for voluntary homicide, the equivalent in Anglo-Saxon jurisdictions of being charged.

“On the basis of the evidence gathered, the public prosecutor considers that the legal conditions for using the weapon have not been met,” Prache said, adding later that the officer concerned had been remanded in custody.

The officer, who fired a single shot, said he had done so because he feared that he and his colleague or someone else could be hit by the car, according to Prache. The officers said they felt “threatened” as the car drove off.

Nahel was shot in the western Paris suburb on Tuesday as he drove away from police who tried to stop him. Prache said he had been pulled over for a

range of traffic offences including speeding, jumping red lights and driving in a bus lane.



A screengrab of footage of the police traffic check that led to the death of 17-year-old Nahel M. Photograph: AP

Police initially said one officer had shot at the teenager – who was not old enough to drive unaccompanied in France – because he was driving his car at him. That version was quickly contradicted by a video circulating on social media.

The video, verified by French news agencies, shows two police officers beside a Mercedes AMG car, with one shooting at the driver at close range as he pulled away. The boy died shortly afterwards from his wounds, prosecutors said.

Late on Thursday, the officer's lawyer said he had offered an apology to the teen's family.

“The first words he pronounced were to say sorry and the last words he said were to say sorry to the family,” Laurent-Franck Lienard told BFMTV. “He is devastated, he doesn't get up in the morning to kill people.”

Overnight on Wednesday protesters launched fireworks at police, set cars on fire and torched public buildings in the suburbs around Paris, but also in Toulouse in the south-west and towns across the north. There were also disturbances in Amiens, Dijon, St-Etienne, and outside Lyon.

[Unrest across Paris](#)

The use of lethal force by officers against Nahel has fed into a deep-rooted perception of police brutality in the ethnically diverse areas of France's biggest cities.

"We are sick of being treated like this. This is for Nahel, we are Nahel," two young men calling themselves "avengers" said as they wheeled rubbish bins from a nearby estate to add to a burning barricade. One said his family had lived in France for three generations but "they are never going to accept us".



About 2,000 riot police were deployed in and around Paris on Wednesday night. Photograph: Christophe Ena/AP

[Macron had called for calm on Wednesday](#), telling reporters: "We have an adolescent who was killed. It is unexplainable and inexcusable. Nothing justifies the death of a young man." His remarks were unusually frank in a country where senior politicians are often reluctant to criticise police, given voters' security concerns.

Rights groups allege systemic racism within French law enforcement agencies, a charge Macron has previously denied. “We have to go beyond saying that things need to calm down,” said Dominique Sopo, head of the campaign group SOS Racisme.

“The issue here is how we make it so that we have a police force that, when they see Blacks and Arabs, don’t tend to shout at them, use racist terms against them and in some cases, shoot them in the head.”

[Map of flashpoints across France](#)

Tuesday’s killing was the third fatal shooting during traffic stops in France in 2023. There was a record 13 such shootings last year, three in 2021 and two in 2020, according to a Reuters tally, which shows the majority of victims since 2017 were Black or of Arab origin.

Two leading police unions fought back against the criticism, saying the detained police officer should be presumed innocent until found otherwise.

With Reuters and Agence France-Presse

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2023.06.29 - Spotlight

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- ['There was no level playing field' How Wimbledon and apartheid South Africa blocked a teen's tennis dream](#)
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Ace Tilton Ratcliff holds the skull of their cat, Moxie, in Boynton Beach, Florida. Photograph: Sydney Walsh/The Guardian

[Pets](#)

**Taxidermy, skull preservation,
maceration: pet owners find new ways**

to process grief

Some practices used to honor a pet's death may some feel uneasy, but animal lovers say they find solace in the process

[SE Smith](#)

Thu 29 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 15.44 EDT

Shortly after my cat Mr Bell died, I contacted Angela Kirkpatrick. I needed Mr Bell – a delightful cat famous for his cropped ears and his ongoing feud with the refrigerator – to live on in some way, and I knew Kirkpatrick, a jeweler, could help me do that.

Together, we designed a reliquary ring with Mr Bell's ashes and hair to commemorate him. The end product was a thin silver band decorated with nasturtium leaves – a nod to the flower-covered house we lived in when I first brought him home – and a yellow stone, through which the hair and ashes are visible. I wear it often, and when it's not on my hand, it sits in a ring tray next to his urn.

The process helped me grieve, but it also sent me down a rabbit hole of pet memorials and rituals that I haven't been able to emerge from, not least because my cats keep dying. Along the way I discovered a network of people – including taxidermists, jewelers, tattooers, fiber artists and good old-fashioned pet cemetery operators – who are providing pet owners with a myriad of aftercare choices.

This is a nation of pet lovers, after all, and that love persists beyond death.



Mr Bell, the writer's beloved cat. Photograph: Courtesy of s.e. smith

“In this space, we don’t judge when it comes to other people’s grief,” says Joslin Roth, founding owner of Resting Waters, a pet funeral home in Seattle that offers aquamation, a process that uses a solution of heat and lye to reduce remains to bone (it is also legal for human remains in a [growing number of states](#)). “All grief is honored and valid. If it doesn’t negatively affect you, it’s not your problem.”

Lisa Egan, guardian to Betty, a spirited black cat and steadfast companion, had a memorial necklace made with her cat’s fur. Spencer Hughes has his feline in his freezer, looking forward to the day he can afford to get her skeleton cleaned and articulated, or assembled. Victoria Beverly has the cremated remains of her cat Reginald on a shelf, after being unable to attend his euthanasia because of pandemic restrictions. “M” keeps the ashes of her German shepherd inside a plush dog. Randy Potts buried his dog Nancy under a rhododendron in February 2020, and “couldn’t bear to open the bag” the vet sent her home in. The memoirist Lilly Dancyger got a memorial tattoo of her beloved cat Lady.

Some of the most eccentric practices might make some feel uneasy – such as skull preservations, keeping fur in freezers or, perhaps most surprising of all, skeletal articulation. But this diversity of choices reflects the different

sentiments of pet owners, who have to make decisions for their companions while experiencing disenfranchised grief – the sense that a loss is undervalued or less important because it is a pet, even when it consumes their whole universe.

Some pet guardians are even doing it for themselves – and not just in the time-honored tradition of backyard burial. I call up my colleague Ace Tilton Ratcliff, a former mortician and current artist and writer. Along with their veterinarian husband, they have seen a parade of pets over the years – a common phenomenon for veterinarians, who sometimes end up with animals surrendered to their clinics, many of which have significant health issues. When their cat Moxie died after a rapid and inexplicable illness, Ratcliff and their husband decided to perform a necropsy. “He ultimately decided that the process was a better experience for him than the not knowing,” Ratcliff said, though that didn’t make it easy.



Ratcliff holds jewelry they made of their deceased pets’ bones. Photograph: Sydney Walsh/The Guardian

They performed the procedure in their own home, and sometimes had to take breaks. “It really became a very educational practice. It was fascinating to see the way the parts worked, to see the parts of her body where you could see sickness and illness,” Ratcliff says, their voice aglow with

fascination and reverence. One particularly intriguing element involved inflating the alveoli of the lungs, creating a strangely beautiful flutter of life in the video Ace sent after we talked. When they finished, determining that Moxie had died from an obstruction, they were left with the question of what to do with what remained.

The couple decided they wanted to preserve Moxie's skeleton, but instead of sending her out, Ace began the long process of maceration, in which soaking in repeated changes of water over the course of months separates the soft tissue from the bone, eventually leaving only bones behind. Another popular method of skeletonization relies on a colony of dermestid beetles to remove the soft tissue, but it requires maintaining said colony, and it is not always possible to process the remains of euthanized pets or those who took certain medications prior to death.

Moxie's bones will need to be further cleaned and processed to remove grease and yield a fully skeletonized cat, with bones that can be articulated, stored in a box, or kept in other ways. (If you're wondering where those changes of water are going, Ace's Florida yard is well-hydrated.) Ratcliff is also macerating other animals and parts, including a leg amputated from a pet dog, Vix, and the skull of another cat, Whimsy – “the best cat in the entire fucking universe”. They refer to these projects, part of the mourning process, as “holy”, while noting that it's definitely not for everyone.

“It's a gnarly soupy gross concoction of death,” they say, commenting that sometimes they're out in the yard and “whoo-ee, this smells like dead things”.



Ratcliff with their dog, Rupert, on a recent afternoon at their home. Photograph: Sydney Walsh/Sydney Walsh for The Guardian

Ace's love for their animals shows through the intimate handling of their remains, from casting the vertebrae of a beloved dog in bronze and wearing it as jewelry to keeping another dog in their home for three days after death to give them time to mourn, rather than rushing the remains to a crematorium.

“It was really comforting to be able to get up in the middle of the night and walk over, put my hand on him, still touch him,” they say, while also noting that this approach to mourning was new to their husband, who was offered little training in vet school for managing the aftermath of euthanasia beyond whisking the body into the freezer to await collection. “Death has become not just something we have removed from the house, but socially removed from wanting to think about.”

The level of mourning intimacy that Ratcliff prefers may not be for everyone, but they say: “We are so trained to deny the experiences of death that we aren't having these conversations or giving people the opportunity,” arguing that a conversation about end-of-life care should happen from the start of a relationship with an animal, allowing people to think about decisions such as the level of medical intervention they want to provide,

whether they want their animals euthanized at home, and what they want to do with the remains.

Thinking ahead and facing death can feel ghoulish, but it allows people to make more informed decisions. Many of us haven't thought or prepared for the loss of our pets, and an unprepared death can feel like a shattering, especially with pressure to make a decision about the remains as quickly as possible (my own vet handed out a tag for cremation with the euthanasia consent form).

In her [TikTok debut](#) on New Year's Eve 2020, Pot Roast the cat is a fluffy white and black cat with a tolerant expression, lying on her back as her guardian, known as Pot Roast's mom, rubs her chest (Pot Roast's mom asked to be referred to pseudonymously to protect her privacy). Pot Roast's paws lie loosely on her hands, and she has no idea that she's about to turn into an internet phenomenon with more than 1 million extremely dedicated followers.

Like most of the famous cats of TikTok, Pot Roast had a "thing" that made her famous. (Other TikTok cat "things" include [licking graham crackers](#), [being orange](#), [smellin'](#)). Pot Roast, in all her scruffy glory, looked like taxidermy, thanks to her stillness in many videos, and commenters weren't shy about remarking upon it. Her "dead" status [became](#) a [running joke](#) on the channel until 2022, when she actually did die after a brief and unexpected illness.



Pot Roast and her mom in a photo from her lifetime. Photograph: Courtesy of Pot Roast's mom

In videos [from her final days](#), it's clear Pot Roast's mom is bereft, navigating the challenging experience of being a public figure experiencing an awful event and wanting to speak to followers, who at times crossed the lines with comments on [Pot Roast's health](#) and her mom's choices. Thanks to the parasocial nature of TikTok, where followers form deep connections, the loss felt personal.

But Pot Roast's journey was not over. She headed to Oracle Natural Sciences and the gentle hands of Alessandra Dzuba, the taxidermist preparing and articulating her skeleton, a process that can take up to two years. (In the short term, [Bot Roast](#), a truly terrifying animatronic cat, will be holding down the fort.)

“She has the [cutest bones in the world](#). I know it for sure!” Pot Roast's mom says over Zoom, her face alight about her decision to get a skeletal preservation and deeply appreciative of Dzuba's work and care, which have been an important part of the grieving process. She tracks every step of Pot Roast's journey, requesting updates that include [images of her body in various stages of processing](#) (such as, for example, in a tank with Dzuba's dermestid colony) that other people might find off-putting. Even when Pot

Roast isn't looking her best, her mom finds the images and updates an affirming recognition of her grief; while her interest can seem macabre to some, it is also deeply rooted in love.

“Death is horrible and painful, that’s all you see. You don’t see their lives being celebrated,” she says, expressing enthusiasm and appreciation for the method of aftercare she ultimately chose, and for participating in the process.

For her, this isn't just personal because she loved Pot Roast: she felt unprepared and didn't know about the options available to her after her cat's death, and she wants to make sure other people aren't put in the same position.

Dzuba says planning ahead can reduce distress. She recommends collecting mementos before animals pass away: paw prints and whiskers, fur combings and nose prints. The best time to make aftercare decisions is before death, she says, when people have time to sit down, think about what they want, and explore options.

The comments under images and videos from taxidermists and others who work closely with remains often include expressions of horror and disgust, despite efforts to maintain a death-positive space. Some are forced to periodically battle with alleged terms of service violations and account shutdowns caused by reports from squeamish users. But growing interest has made those who offer non-traditional memorials more outspoken, and that makes them easier to find – just as I found Angela in a time of need. Instagram, TikTok and other social media platforms include a growing array of aftercare providers educating the public about their work.



Ratcliff keeps mementos of deceased pets on a shelf in their home.
Photograph: Sydney Walsh/Sydney Walsh for The Guardian

The demand is here: Resting Waters was forced to [temporarily stop accepting taxidermy commissions](#) because its provider was overwhelmed. Many providers noticed an uptick in demand during the pandemic, forcing them to offer referrals, start waiting lists and educate clients about the best techniques for freezer storage. While it's hard to quantify whether this was the result of more visibility or shifts in how we viewed animals during the pandemic, people facing mortality certainly had more time to ponder pet aftercare, and isolation intensified their relationships. "Grieving a pet is weird. From the outside, people expect it to be brief," Dancyger says, adding that her tattoo wasn't closure, but "having a physical marker has helped".

Megan Devine, who runs Refuge in Grief, a grief therapy practice that focuses on grief as an experience rather than a problem to fix, says that the death of a companion animal is very undervalued in our culture. Her work includes finding ways to "fill support cups" and create room for all kinds of reactions to grief that center the griever, rather than pressures for that grief to end. Finding appropriate times and places, and avoiding "grief hijacking", is also an important element; when people feel disenfranchised, they may drag their losses into conversations about someone else's, causing frustration or

distress. “We don’t make space for grief of any kind,” human or animal, Devine notes, creating a competition for finite resources.

Commemorations also don’t even require the subject to be deceased. The fiber artist Theresa Furrer runs Nine Lives Twine, a service that spins pet hair into yarn. (Poodle evidently “spins up nice”.) Her work relies on combed undercoat, not cut hair, in combination with other fibers. She encourages her customers to knit or crochet with the final product, although she also creates scarves and other finished works on commission.

Her interest was driven by the loss of her cat, who oversees her workshop in taxidermy form, though she says she’s not sure she would choose taxidermy again for herself.

She’s not alone in thinking ahead about what she wants for her pets, a sort of measuring of the coffin that engages with anticipatory grief – though in a twist, she won’t be spinning the fur of her two living cats: they’re hairless.

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Hoosen Bobat hailed from a segregated Durban suburb and travelled 50km to practice on private courts as a youngster. Photograph: Hoosen Bobat

[The ObserverWimbledon](#)

How Wimbledon and apartheid South Africa blocked a teen's tennis dream

Hoosen Bobat was thrilled to receive an invite to Junior Wimbledon in 1971 – what happened next still hurts, 52 years on



[Geneva Abdul](#)
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Thu 29 Jun 2023 03.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Jul 2023 14.39 EDT

When a telegram arrived from the All England Lawn Tennis Club inviting Hoosen Bobat to play in the 1971 [Wimbledon](#) junior tournament, he read it more than a dozen times to be certain it was addressed to him.

The accomplishment was surreal for the then 18-year-old, hailing from a segregated Durban suburb where life was a “struggle all the time” under South Africa’s brutal apartheid regime.

“There was no level playing field,” recalls Bobat on a recent trip to London. Then, black players were denied facilities and couldn’t play their white counterparts. Matches at all-white tennis centres were watched from caged sections, he recalls, and once a week he would travel 50km to practise on private courts.

All the years of sacrifice weren’t in vain, he thought when the news arrived, and with it came the opportunity to become the first black tennis player from South [Africa](#) to play at Junior Wimbledon.

“All we wanted to do was play tennis,” he says. “To make our people back home proud that black people, no matter the lack of facilities, lack of sponsorship, can still play on the greatest stage in the world.”

In the 1970s, against the backdrop of the anti-apartheid movement and increasing pressure from the international sports community, the country maintained its racist policies. In 1970 South Africa was excluded from the Davis Cup and the International Olympic Committee banned the country’s representatives, alongside other sports boycotts at the time.

Athletes were told by the white government not to mix politics and sport, Bobat recalls: “But we used to say, hang on, from the moment you are born as a black in South Africa, you are spending the rest of your life trying to erase politics from sport.”

While non-white players were restricted playing at home, some overseas athletes boycotted playing in the apartheid state amid calls for change in sporting policy. Others such as Indigenous Australian player [Evonne Goolagong-Cawley](#) competed in 1971 under the designation of an “honorary white” status – or what Bobat refers to as “window dressing”.



Evonne Goolagong on her way to victory in the 1971 Wimbledon women’s singles final – she was designated as ‘honorary white’ when playing in

South Africa. Photograph: Express/Getty Images

In 1967, at the height of apartheid, Bobat's family was forcibly moved from their home of 50 years under the South African government's Group Areas Act which created racially segregated areas. The family was given three months to relocate 20km out of town.

"That left a big mark on me at that time, seeing them speaking to my grandmother and my mother in that way – really being nasty," Bobat recalls. "And I'm thinking to myself: 'But this is our house, we built it' – but it didn't matter."

At 18, Bobat was part of a six-person team sent on a European tour organised by the non-racial Southern Africa Lawn [Tennis](#) Union (SALTU), separate from the country's white tennis union.

He applied for leave from his university, but was later denied by the school's senate, forcing him to reapply upon his return.

He had applied for entry to Junior Wimbledon, satisfying all the criteria at the time. As a top-ranked junior, he held national under-19 titles and was a member of a recognised International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) club.

One week before the tournament, however, a telegram from the ILTF arrived requesting an urgent meeting in London. Bobat was surprised to see the head of the white SALTU union as he entered the office, and wondered: "What is he doing here all the way from South Africa?"

It was then, Bobat recalls, that the ILTF general secretary told him the union leader objected to his entry. He said Bobat did not belong to an affiliated club, nor was he the official No 1 player in the country. A player from the white union was, he was told.

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Just like that, game, set and match, my dream was over

Hoosen Bobat

“And just like that, game, set and match, my dream was over,” says Bobat, shaking his head.

Bobat returned to Durban with his passion for tennis killed. Remotivated by his parents, he continued to play while completing school, before a back injury forced him to retire his racket from competitive play.

He stayed involved in the sport, working for the non-racial tennis body, coaching many children to provincial and national levels before later joining his family's brokerage.

But 52 years on, and with Bobat now 71, he is left with more questions than answers. How did the process around his removal from Junior Wimbledon happen? Did one man alone make the decision? And how did the All England Lawn Tennis Club accept it?

The retraction from the junior tournament came nearly a year after non-racial union officials were approached to join the white union in exchange for “honorary status”, Bobat recalls. “Our tennis president and secretary, after 10 minutes, showed them the door.

“Even now, nothing much has changed. There are less black – which we define as Indian, coloured and black – tennis players now than then.”

It was cathartic, however, to speak about the incident decades later with his friend, Saleem Badat, an author and professor at the University of the Free State. What began as a conversation between them during the pandemic now forms much of Badat's recently published book: *Tennis, Apartheid and Social Justice: The First Non-Racial International Tennis Tour, 1971*.

"I take very seriously the idea that the past is not dead," Badat says. "The past is not even past. People are living with this trauma today in South Africa, of things that happened 50 years ago. These injustices are having their toll, even today, people are still waiting for apologies."

Badat has requested a public apology from the AELTC and the ITF (the ILTF having dropped "lawn" from its name in the late-1970s), which was echoed by Labour MPs and veteran anti-apartheid campaigners Peter Hain and Jeremy Corbyn this week.

The trauma that this caused, and continues to cause, Mr Bobat is regrettable and shameful

Peter Hain

Lord Hain said: "The collusion of international sports federations in permitting South Africa to participate in sport internationally and effectively denying black sportspersons opportunities is well-documented. That the AELTC complied with the directive of the ILTF and the trauma that this caused, and continues to cause, Mr Bobat is regrettable and shameful. I very much hope that the AELTC will unreservedly apologise to Mr Bobat and the South African non-racial sports fraternity."

The AELTC has thanked Badat for bringing the matter to their attention and has offered to speak with Bobat directly. "We are currently reviewing the information available to us regarding how entries to the Junior Championships were administered in 1971," a spokesperson said.

An ITF spokesperson said: "This is a very important matter, and the ITF is looking for information about the potential injustice this may have caused, both within tennis records dating back to 1971, as well as from Prof Badat who has also brought it to our attention."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2023/jun/28/how-junior-wimbledon-apartheid-south-africa-blocked-hoosen-bobat-tennis-dream>

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River span ... Barrowford village, Lancashire, has a Georgian mill, old tollhouse, packhorse bridge and weavers' cottages. Photograph: Mark Waugh/Alamy

[Lancashire holidays](#)

Looms with a view: a tour of Lancashire's former mill towns

Visit the region's old mills, as well as its museums, galleries and parks, in the buildup to this year's British Textile Biennial

[Chris Moss](#)

Thu 29 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 02.30 EDT

Non-practitioners tend to see the world of textiles through the doily tinted spectacles of the BBC's The Great British Sewing Bee or else through the soot-filled eyes of William Blake's "dark satanic mills". The filter of postindustrialisation frames the spinning rooms and weaving sheds as bygone, other; demolition and development have sought to erase the epoch-making heritage.

But textiles and the industry that grew up around them in the former colonies and north of England continue to inform artistic creation and debate. In October, the third edition of the [British Textile Biennial](#) will trace the routes of fibres and fabrics across continents and centuries to and from the north of England in a series of commissions and exhibitions in museums, galleries, former mills, theatres and historical buildings across east Lancashire.

The buildup to the big showcase is an opportunity to embark on a summer tour of the spaces left behind by the textile industry. If Pennine [Lancashire](#) was first shaped by geology, weather and ruminants, it was given its present-day contours largely by the makers of cloth and thread. Even before the landmark innovations of the 18th and early 19th centuries, such as the water frame, spinning jenny, flying shuttle and factory system, flax was harvested and sheep were shorn for the linen and wool markets. Then came slavery and American cotton, and a revolution that was not limited to economics or business; the rhythms of human life were changed, capitalism was king, towns and cities burgeoned.



Following the thread ... A weaving loom in the Queen Street Mill Textile Museum, Burnley. Photograph: Brenda Kean/Alamy

Lancashire's textile trail is a [lopsided, reverse V](#) from Preston through the valleys of Blackburn and Burnley and down to Bacup, Bolton and Bury (if you get lost, think “B”), splintering off to Oldham, Rochdale and, of course, Manchester, where bulk trading and shipping were consolidated. The smoking chimneys and clatter of clogs are long gone, but everywhere you look are vestiges of labour history.

A 21st-century visit takes in canals and conservation areas, abandoned and repurposed mills, and stately homes and museums – plus innovative online resources such as the digital [Lancashire Textile Gallery](#). There is living culture all around, from artisanal schemes such as the [Northern England Fibreshed](#) and its Blackburn-based Homegrown Homespun regenerative fashion pilot project, to schools' programmes like the [one at Gawthorpe Textiles Collection](#), to the region's many independent retailers and artists.

The expression “social fabric” was coined in the 1790s to denote what the textile industry was taking away, as machinery and mass production eroded community life. But out of the convulsions came radical politics, trade unions and, eventually, leisure and recreation. The story is one of beautiful manufactures and beastly conditions, but [Lancashire](#) only makes sense if

you grasp its complicated boom years as the hub of a global economy based around cotton bales.

Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham



Material benefits ... Gawthorpe Hall, in Burnley, houses a textile collection. Photograph: Andrew Fairclough Photography/Alamy

With an Elizabethan core, this country house – managed by the National Trust and Lancashire county council – was remodelled in the 1850s by architect Charles Barry, best known for rebuilding the Houses of Parliament. He collaborated with the designer and architect Augustus Pugin and the decorative firm JG Crace to create a splendid Victorian gothic pile. The landscaped gardens, with ornamental terraces, are equally beguiling. The hall houses the region's largest collection of portraits on loan from the National Portrait Gallery, as well as the Gawthorpe Textiles Collection, established by Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth – though there's only space for a small sample of the 30,000 items. Gawthorpe Hall was rented to one of the descendants of Pendle witchfinder Roger Nowell, and was regularly visited by Charlotte Brontë; it marks the western end of the Brontë Way long-distance footpath.

Open Wed-Sun 12-5pm. Adult £6, 16 and under free, [nationaltrust.org.uk](https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)



Pieces from Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth's textile collection on display at Gawthorpe Hall. Photograph: The National Trust Photolibrary/Alamy

Padiham street art

Artists Chris Butcher and Gavin Renshaw, in collaboration with Mid Pennine Arts and Gawthorpe Hall, recently adorned gables wall on Church Street and Station Road in Padiham with two murals – one conflating the town's industrial heritage, old trams and textile history, the other celebrating Whit walks and traditional parades.

Centenary Mill, New Hall Lane, Preston

Repurposing has saved some monumental mills. This Grade II-listed redbrick, steel-framed beauty, built in 1891 for local firm Horrockses, Crewdson & Co, is especially imposing, and its chimney neck-cricketingly tall. The main spinning mill is now an apartment building. The [antiques centre](#) in the adjacent offices is worth a mosey for the fabulous old furniture and other treasures on display. [Tulketh Mill](#) on Balcarres Road, built in 1905, is also listed and worth an admiring gawp.



Chimney steep ... Centenary Mill in Preston. Photograph: PA Images/Alamy

Pendle Radicals' Gandhi in Bowland walk

Textiles played a role in Britain's colonial rule in India and became central to Gandhi's mission to enable his nation to manage its economic fortunes. In September 1931, while attending a conference at St James's Palace in London, he travelled north to visit Greenfield Mill (since demolished) in Darwen to observe the impact of the Indian boycott of British goods on workers. He took time out at Heys Farm, West Bradford, the home of socialist mill owner Percy Davies, which doubled as a Quaker guest house and adult education centre. Read a blog about the visit [here](#) and use this OS [map](#) to locate the property – the walk can be combined with a longer [River Ribble and villages pub walk](#) for a day out. In late summer, Mid Pennine Arts will organise a guided walk as part of its [Pendle Radicals](#) series; the organisation recently published the book [Banner Culture](#), containing 213 campaigning banners previously displayed at Brierfield Mill.

Helmshore Mills Textile Museum, Rossendale

Encompassing Higher Mill and Whitaker Mill, this museum recounts the stories of the woollen and cotton industries through an original waterwheel, carding engines and spinning mules, and child-friendly interactive displays.

At the former Wavell Mill on Holcombe Road, note the blue plaque commemorating the power loom riots of 1826, when workers fearful of losing their jobs attacked new-fangled machinery with hammers and picks.

Open Fri-Sun 12-4pm. Adult £4, 16 and under free, lancashire.gov.uk

Barrowford village



Pendle Heritage Centre, in Barrowford. Photograph: John Morrison/Alamy

This village was a former farming settlement that evolved into a thriving manufacturing and transport centre; it has an old toll house and packhorse bridge, and is situated close to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. Some shops on the main road are in former weavers' cottages, and a much older one was unearthed during excavations for the [Pendle Heritage Centre](#). A water mill was mentioned in legal documents in 1541, later described as a cloth or fulling mill. On Gisburn Road is [Higherford Mill](#), a Georgian-era water-driven spinning mill later adapted to incorporate steam power that was saved from demolition in 1999 and now houses artists' workshops, with occasional exhibitions.

More info and walking guide at visitpendle.com

Blackburn and Darwen

More than 200 chimneys pierced the Blackburn sky during this city's cloth-making heyday, supported by factories turning out shuttles, reeds, healds and steam engines. The social history section of the [local museum](#) contains textiles-themed panels and exhibits, including locally built looms. A [Blackburn Heritage trail](#) takes in 31 sites, including the Cotton Exchange, opened in 1865, the Old Bank – where millworkers rioted over reduced wages and hours in 1878 – and Richmond Terrace, where prominent mill owner John Baynes resided. Another good [walk](#) in nearby Darwen takes in India Mill and a wallpaper surface printing machine. Blackburn hosts a [Festival of Making](#) on the weekend of 8-9 July 2023, which includes workshops, exhibitions and talks covering textile-based crafts along with printmaking, bookbinding, pottery and recycling.

Open Wed-Sat 12-4.45pm. Free, blackburnmuseum.org.uk

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Peel Park and Gatty Park, Accrington

Some textile magnates sought to compensate for decades of pollution by donating or selling at a reduced rate their parklands, which were turned into municipal green spaces. Parsley Peel and his son Robert made their fortunes from calico printing; Robert's son, also named Robert, was twice prime minister and was the founder of the Metropolitan police and modern

Conservative party. Peel Park in Accrington opened in 1909 and was part-donated, part-sold by the family. The Gatty family's wealth also derived from textiles, especially dyeing; French immigrant Frederick Albert Gatty created a deep red dye known as Turkey red that made him heaps of money and, after a visit to British India, developed a mineral-based khaki dye, which he patented in 1884. Small but lovely, Gatty Park is home to the family mansion, [Elmfield Hall](#), which contains Mr Gatty's Tea Room (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm). The hall and grounds, plus £500 for maintenance, were donated by the family to the people of Accrington in 1920.



Take a tea break ... at Elmfield Hall in Gatty Park. Photograph: Steven Bennett/Alamy

The Weavers' Triangle Visitor Centre, Burnley

Burnley's chaotic eyesore of a town centre is itself a must-see for anyone who wants to understand what postindustrial decline did to once booming districts. The Newtown Mill chimney is [listed](#), while its namesake mill is part of a University of Lancashire scheme to turn the Weavers' Triangle into part of its campus. The visitor centre beside the canal has a small museum, containing a replica weavers' dwelling.

Open Sat-Sun 2-4pm. Free, weaverstriangle.co.uk

Prism Contemporary, Blackburn

This independent, maker-run gallery regularly hosts shows featuring embroidery, knitting, printmaking and experimental textiles work.

prismcontemporary.co.uk

Queen Street Mill Textile Museum



The weaving shed at Queen Street Mill Textile Museum. Photograph: Rory Prior/Alamy

As the sole surviving steam-powered mill in the world, Queen Street merits its Grade I listing. The guided tour, included with tickets, covers coal-fired boilers and other handsome machines that would have impressed Brunel, as well as a weaving shed housing 308 working looms – sometimes switched on so visitors can imagine what it was like to toil in a working mill. Employees learned to mee-maw – dramatically mouthing their speech, like Cissie and Ada in Les Dawson's sketches.

Open Wed-Sat 12am-4pm. Adult £3, under fives free, lancashire.gov.uk

Super Slow Way workshops

The Super Slow Way is a cultural programme taking place along 20 miles of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal from Blackburn to Pendle. It has a lead role in the regional revival of textiles and offers a series of workshops, including sashiko, spinning, dyeing, macramé, brooch-making and flax-growing.

superslowway.org.uk

British Textile Biennial 2023, various locations

The third edition of this major festival, running from 29 September to 29 October across many of the above venues and others, will look at fibres and fabrics through historical, cultural, environmental and creative lenses. Highlights of this year's biennial include installations by Nairobi's Nest Collective, Victoria Udondian, Tenant of Culture and Thierry Oussou, along with a new performance by Common Wealth theatre company, commissions by Christine Borland, Nick Jordan and Jacob Cartwright, performative sculpture by Jeremy Hutchison, and a major exhibition by south Asian artists from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Britain.

[Goodshaw Chapel](#) will house an installation that shows up the building's links with so-called "slave cloth" – the coarse, hard-wearing hand-spun and woven woollen and flax cloths that were sold for use on plantations in the colonies. Rossendale's [Whitaker Art Gallery](#) will showcase work by contemporary South Asian artists. Blackburn Cathedral's Material Memory will feature a display of much-loved textile items in the crypt, which have been loaned by members of the public and contain stories that challenge throwaway culture.

britishtextilebiennial.co.uk

Getting around

The 464 bus links Accrington and Rochdale via Bacup and Rawtenstall. Hotline 152 runs between Preston, Burnley and Blackburn. The No 2 goes from Burnley to Barrowford via Nelson and Colne. The East Lancashire, Calder valley and Ribble valley railway lines connect the main towns to Manchester Victoria and Preston.

Where to stay

Accommodation apt for a textile-themed tour includes [Rosehill House hotel](#) in Burnley, which has doubles from £95 B&B, and [Spinning Block](#), Clitheroe, with doubles from £105.

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Colleagues who are beginning to share a job must agree on crucial practicalities from the start, such as handovers and communication tools.
Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

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‘She divorced me’: how to make job shares work – and why they can fail

In the post-Covid shift to hybrid working, the idea of job sharing has lagged behind. For some, though, it’s the ideal solution. Job partners describe the pitfalls and how to make a success of it

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[Rachel Williams](#)

Thu 29 Jun 2023 02.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 02.30 EDT

More than three years on from the first Covid lockdown, it is clear that flexible working is here to stay. [Recent research](#) revealed that two-thirds of employees now work flexibly, with those who are able to do this reporting greater job satisfaction.

But while working from home and hybrid working have become routine for many, job sharing lags far behind; just 1% of workers surveyed are doing it, despite higher demand for job-sharing opportunities from employees.

While most companies were able to adapt working practices to support home working fairly quickly, the same level of support is largely absent when it comes to employees seeking a job share, according to those who specialise in sharing roles.

“There is a lot of expectation on job sharers to make everything work from the beginning,” says Rachel Maguire, one half of the [Job Share Pair](#). She and her co-founder, Hannah Hall-Turner, successfully shared a high-level HR role in property services before beginning their [job-share consultancy](#).

Employer-run tools to help people find job-share partners are thin on the ground. The civil service used to have [a celebrated “job share finder”](#), which by 2019 had helped [more than 100 employees form partnerships](#), but it no longer exists.

She basically divorced me [from the job share]. And I didn’t see that coming. I was really upset

Emma, civil servant

For Emma, a job share seemed the ideal way to switch to part-time work after having her first child, without compromising on her civil service career ambitions.

But, from the start, she says: “It felt like we were having to design the rules constantly and carry the pressure of being seen to be a successful job share.”

Despite this, everything seemed to be going well, so Emma was blindsided when her partner announced after a year that she was not enjoying it and wanted to end the arrangement. “She basically divorced me,” Emma says. “And I didn’t see that coming. I was really upset.”

With hindsight, she admits they should have invested much more time in understanding each other’s working styles before they started – something that experts stress is crucial.

“Someone who wants a job share might be told by the company ‘OK, great – can you find somebody?’” says Sophie Smallwood, founder and co-chief

executive – with her husband, Dave – of [Roleshare](#), an online platform that matches people with potential job-share partners and helps firms hire them.

“What are you going to do – go on Facebook and be, like: ‘Hey, I’m looking for a job share, any of my friends want to?’ Go on the intranet at your company and post something?”

“It can feel daunting,” says Smallwood, “and it doesn’t feel achievable.”



How you divide tasks can be problematic. One woman in a job share says she regretted working at the start of the week: ‘You come in on a Monday: everything is in the inbox. Of the things that were shared, I seemed to always do all of them.’ Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

This dilemma is the one facing Jacqueline, a job-share veteran of several years. “Job sharing is fantastic,” she says. “It’s given me the opportunity to do senior jobs that I would never have been able to do otherwise.

“But now my partner wants to leave the organisation, and I don’t. It’s like breaking up – we know we can’t go on together, because we want different things, but as a partnership it works so well.

“I would like a new role, but I’m struggling to work out how to find a new partner,” she says. “The only way I’m able to do it is by emailing people

I've worked with in the past, asking if they, or anyone they know, might be looking for a job share."

Jacqueline is frustrated at the lack of support from her employer. "You're given the opportunity to job share, but then it's all on your back – they make it easier for women to be in the workplace, but they're not giving them the support around it. It's really shortsighted."

Of the things that were shared, I seemed to always do all of them at the beginning of the week

Rita, higher education administrator

There is no data on the gender split among job sharers, but in Maguire and Hall-Turner's experience, the vast majority are women, often returning to work after maternity leave. Yet male job sharers do exist – on Roleshare, about 40% of those expressing an interest in job sharing are men – and it's not always about parenting.

"We have seen both men and women job share, not just to care for their children but to care for elderly relatives, pursue side-hustle ambitions, juggle sporting commitments, support their community or volunteer, study or pursue lifelong learning," Hall-Turner says.

"Post-Covid, we have definitely heard from more men interested in job sharing," she says.

Yet she thinks the generalisation that sharing jobs is for working mothers, and the fact that many people simply don't know about it, means it "currently doesn't feel like an accessible way of working to everyone".

"We need job sharers to be loud and proud," Hall-Turner says. "Through our networking, we've been surprised to see some who don't want to shout about it, particularly in traditional industries, for fear of 'flexism' [stigma around this type of working]."

The number of people sharing jobs has [declined slightly in recent years](#), and

increased awareness of [other types of flexible working](#), such as compressed hours, could be one cause, she thinks.

When they are coaching employers who are making the option available, Maguire and Hall-Turner encourage them to work with new job sharers from the beginning, ensuring they have the right support to agree on crucial practicalities such as handovers and communication tools. But beginning a job share is only part of the process; what happens when it goes wrong?

Rita, who works in higher education administration, thinks lack of such support led to her feeling she was doing more work than her partner, while simultaneously becoming deskilled in key parts of the role. “We had a line manager who was perfectly supportive on the face of it, but really wasn’t interested in how we made it work,” she says.

She and her partner agreed to split the job by theme. But a year later, Rita realised processes in the areas she did not handle had changed, and she had been left behind.

She also regretted having chosen to work from Monday to Wednesday: “You know what it’s like when you come in on a Monday – everything is in the inbox. Of the things that were shared, I seemed to always do all of them at the beginning of the week. And her days were somehow much quieter.”

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Maguire says that setting clear principles around working practices at the outset – for instance, around respecting time outside work – is the bedrock of a well-functioning job share.

Those principles can be drawn up at any time, she adds, so if things start to go wrong and you have nothing in place, it's not too late.

What about contemplating a job share with someone you have only just met? Although they have yet to meet, Carmen, a startup founder, and Nicola, a chief operating officer in the tech sector, have already applied for a job as a pair after connecting on Roleshare.

Each describes being blown away by the other's honesty and openness, and an instant recognition of their shared values. They insist they have no anxieties. "When I meet Nicola in person, it will be the same as now – except that I will give her a big hug," Carmen says.

For Nicola, it seems like dating: "You meet somebody, you get a good feeling about it, you're willing to give it a try. OK, maybe it doesn't work out in the end. But what's the alternative – you don't give it a go?"

The dos and don'ts of job sharing

Do Invest serious time in understanding a prospective partner's working style to make sure it's a good fit. "You don't have to be like for like – in fact, yin and yang can work really well together," says Sophie Smallwood, from Roleshare.

"[It's about] being aligned on work values and how you like to work. The other thing, though you don't necessarily have to be identical, is motivation, and really understanding why your partner would want to work this way."

Do Set up – and be prepared to evolve – the processes that will allow a job share to run smoothly and efficiently, from shared inboxes and filing conventions to the all-important handover.

“Make sure the practicalities are thought through before the job share starts,” says Rachel Maguire, of the Job Share Pair. “Handover is what a job-share partnership lives or dies on. The seamless nature of job sharing is what you constantly need to work on, which takes effort and discipline.”

Do Agree working principles at the outset, and be honest with your partner if there is an issue. “If things start to crack, you come back to those and say, ‘this is what we agreed, here are our boundaries, let’s have a really adult, open conversation about how this is starting to not work for me’,” Maguire says.

“We encourage the onus to be on the job-share partnership to have those discussions between them, rather than present them to the business.”

Don’t Let colleagues divide you. “We said we’d always unite, and portray ourselves as one,” Hall-Turner says of her partnership with Maguire.

“We would use language in emails, meetings, on the phone, as ‘we’, as ‘our’. Sometimes there were challenges to that – you might have somebody in the team that would prefer talking to one of us over the other. But we would try and take charge of that quickly, and doing that empowered us.”

Don’t Be unrealistic about job sharing if your personality is not right for it. “If you’re a glory hunter, or you’re not happy to accept praise and criticism together, then you’re not going to be suited to job sharing,” says Maguire.

“There is no room for blame. And if you’re ultra-competitive for your own gains, rather than the gains of the partnership, that doesn’t lend itself to job sharing.”

Don’t Try it in the wrong working culture. “If you have a culture which is archaic – where 9-5 is the norm, where people are staying late, if you don’t have an open culture to flexible working – job sharing is going to be a failure at the outset,” Hall-Turner says.

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Illustration: Sebastien Thibault/The Guardian

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Punishment without trial: Britain's latest weapon in the war against dissent

[George Monbiot](#)



Companies are taking out devastating ‘civil injunctions’ against climate activists – and making them pay the costs

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Apparently, it’s not enough for the police to be given powers to [shut down any protest they choose](#). It’s not enough for peaceful protesters to [face 10 years in prison](#) for seeking to defend the living planet, or to be deprived of the right to [explain their actions to a jury](#). Now they are also being pursued through another means altogether: the civil courts. And the penalties imposed in these cases, with or without trial, legal aid or presumption of innocence, can be much greater.

The law in England and Wales permits corporations and government bodies to create their own system of punishment. The tool it grants them is a simple one, with massive, complex and ever-ramifying consequences. It’s called the [civil injunction](#).

A corporation might apply to a court for an interim injunction. In doing so, [it doesn’t need to prove](#) any claims it makes. It can name not only people who have protested against it, but anyone it feels inclined to name. Papers are

then served on the named people, who have an opportunity to contest the injunction. If, as is often the case, they don't understand the implications, they are likely to miss their chance. In any case, [there is no legal aid](#), so people without knowledge of the law must defend themselves against companies using the best lawyers money can buy. Sometimes the final injunction is granted by a court within days; sometimes it can take years. In either case, the interim measure applies until the final injunction is granted.

These injunctions can be used to prevent any protest by the people they name at or around company property. If you break one, the corporation can apply for an "order of committal". Again, there's no legal aid and no jury. If the court finds you in breach, you can be deemed guilty of contempt, facing up to [two years in prison](#), an unlimited fine and potential confiscation of your assets. This is on top of any penalties incurred under criminal law for the same action. In other words, you can face double jeopardy: two prosecutions for the same offence.

But this is not the worst of it. National Highways Ltd, a company owned by the government, is using a new strategy: passing on the costs of obtaining its injunctions [to the people named in them](#). Once a company has obtained a costs order from the court, it can force the people it names to pay the fees charged by its lawyers. Yes, even if you have adhered to the terms of the injunction, you are charged simply for being named. If you cannot pay, bailiffs might come to your home and confiscate your property.



‘Oil companies, among others, are using these injunctions to stop all protests at their premises.’ Mothers with their children protest outside Shell’s UK headquarters, London, September 2019. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

The people I’ve spoken to, who have been enjoined by National Highways, say they have each been charged £1,500 for its legal fees, and are expecting further bills, which they believe could amount to £5,000 a head.

National Highways tells me, “Cost orders are at the discretion of the court ... National Highways takes seriously its duty to manage public money and to recover for the benefit of the public purse any sum which the court orders is due to be paid to National Highways.”

Some of the people it names also feature on injunctions taken out by other organisations, either because, as dedicated campaigners, they’ve protested in several places, or because they’re “the kind of people” who might. Transport for London, which has [taken out injunctions](#) against campaigners with Just Stop Oil and Insulate Britain, tells me it has also obtained a costs order. Knowing how successful legal strategies spread like wildfire, environmental campaigners fear they could now face costs from multiple claimants, for having the temerity to oppose the destruction of the habitable planet.

Some companies expecting to obtain a costs order may have little incentive to limit their expenses. Quite the opposite: for some, the costlier their lawyers, the greater the hit for those the injunction names. This is how the rich crush the poor.

An environmental campaigner named on several injunctions tells me she sees this tactic as “the way to wear us down”. If you are pushed into poverty by legal costs, “your life becomes incredibly difficult and you don’t have the time and opportunity to protest”. Another injunctioned protester [told Yorkshire Bylines](#), “at least in criminal law if you’re found guilty you know what the penalty is. Here, we have absolutely no idea ... What’s the endpoint?” Another campaigner tells me, “many of us are feeling terrified and overwhelmed ... This has become an absolute fucking nightmare and we don’t know what to do about it.”

If companies decide they want to take you out, there is nothing to stop them from bombarding you with injunctions. Either you drown in paperwork as you apply to the courts to have your name removed, or you face the impossible and ever-growing costs of financing their lawyers.

The human rights barrister [Adam Wagner](#) tells me that while in criminal prosecutions people of limited means might have to pay only a small proportion of the prosecution’s costs, in these cases there’s no such protection. “The costs orders can be huge,” he says. They can “hang over people’s lives for years or even forever, stop them getting mortgages, loans etc. It’s pernicious.”

This is just one of three new injunction tactics being used against people seeking to defend our life support systems. Another is injunctions against “persons unknown”, meaning everyone. No one can contest such orders without having themselves named as a defendant and facing massive potential costs. Oil companies, among others, are using these injunctions to [stop all protests](#) at their premises. This “persons unknown” instrument is being [challenged before the supreme court](#) by Friends of the Earth and others, who expect a ruling soon. The third tactic is a power in this year’s Public Order Act, enabling the government to [bring civil proceedings against protesters](#): double jeopardy is now baked into the law.

These measures are a blatant injustice, a parallel legal system operating without the defences available in criminal law, that can inflict ruinous and open-ended costs. They amount to a system of private fines, to be levied at will and out of the blue against political opponents.

Perhaps you aren't bothered. Perhaps you don't care about activists. But this is an attack on you, too. It's an attack on the democratic right to protest in which our freedoms are rooted. It's an attack on the living world on which we all depend.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist

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Thirty-seven migrants died while attempting to cross the border from Morocco to the Spanish enclave of Melilla on 24 June 2022. Photograph: Javier Bernardo/AP

[OpinionRace](#)

There are two kinds of antiracism. Only one works, and it has nothing to do with ‘diversity training’

[Arun Kundnani](#)



While liberal antiracists argue over vocabulary, radicals take direct action – which is the only way to change the system

Thu 29 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 03.30 EDT

In news that ought to please antiracist campaigners everywhere, just recently everybody seems to be talking about antiracism. Chief executives such as Larry Fink of BlackRock, one of the most powerful financial companies in the world, call for “systemic” racism [to be addressed](#). Books on teaching antiracism to children become [bestsellers](#).

Conservatives [dismiss all this](#) as “woke” – preachy, elitist and unneeded – but they can’t seem to stop talking about it. But all the time, both sides in the debate mistakenly assume there is only one kind of antiracism. They fail to distinguish between two quite different antiracist traditions: one liberal, the other radical.

The liberal tradition sees racism as essentially a matter of irrational beliefs and attitudes. Its founders, such as the anthropologist [Ruth Benedict](#) and gay rights pioneer [Magnus Hirschfeld](#), were interested in understanding the rise of nazism in the 1930s. They concluded that, in societies where racial

prejudices were widespread, liberal democracy could be undermined by political extremists inflaming race hatred to gain power. To remove this danger, they called on the liberal establishment to persuade the masses, especially the poor and uneducated, that racist opinions have no legitimate basis.

This approach remains at the core of liberal antiracism today, from the enthusiasm for diversity training – [a \\$4.3bn business](#) in the US, and one that even [Suella Braverman's Home Office](#) staff are embracing – to the hope that better representation in [Hollywood films](#) will educate us out of our biases. The difference now is that liberals seek to eliminate racist attitudes in the unconscious as much as the conscious mind.

The radical tradition, on the other hand, sees racism as a matter of how economic resources are distributed differently across racial groups. In a 1938 article on “racism in Africa”, for instance, the Trinidadian writer [CLR James](#) argued that British colonial racism was not a set of beliefs or attitudes but a structure of generally observed social rules and policies that enabled economic exploitation. Individual racist attitudes no doubt existed but were not the decisive factor.

Likewise, the Martinican psychiatrist [Frantz Fanon](#) argued in 1956 that we should abandon the habit “of regarding racism as a disposition of the mind, a psychological flaw”. Rather, “military and economic oppression most frequently precedes, makes possible and legitimates” racist beliefs. And this “systematic oppression of a people” can continue even if a majority of citizens do not have racist biases, unconsciously held or otherwise.

Radical antiracists argue that the only way to fight this oppression is to build autonomous organisations with the power to dismantle existing social systems and build new ones. To them, racism is closely connected to capitalism. This is partly because racism weakens class struggle by dividing white workers from most of the world's working people. More fundamentally, race provides a means by which capitalism can more intensively exploit certain categories of worker – the enslaved, the indentured, colonised peasantries, migrant workers – as well as justify discarding peoples deemed superfluous to the economy.

Making the distinction between liberal and radical transforms the debate on antiracism. Conservative attacks on the elitism of antiracists ring true to many because liberal antiracists do indeed think it is the job of elites to educate working-class people out of their irrational beliefs. But that is less true of radical antiracists: they might despair at the historical reluctance of white workers to unite with other exploited classes but they are clear that wealthy elites are their main antagonists. To them, antiracism is about finding ways to build collective power across differently positioned groups of working people.

Liberal antiracists have succeeded over the last half-century in reducing racial prejudices in interpersonal relationships. And they have transformed popular culture: people of colour are now [represented](#) in Hollywood movies at levels proportionate to their presence in the US population. But advances in reducing prejudice and improving representation have not lessened the racism that exists in law, policy and broader economic and institutional practices.

Take, for instance, the expulsion of more than a million, [mainly Mexican](#), people from the US in 2021. This policy behind this is driven by the need to maintain a worldwide racial division of labour. It makes no difference if the immigration officer who carries it out and the employer who profits from it have worked really hard at their diversity awareness training. And it is at the structural level where, since the 1970s, racism has reproduced itself, as ruling classes in the US and Europe mobilised a neoliberal conception of market forces to defeat mass movements for the redistribution of wealth. With those defeats, new ways of dominating Black people and the global south became possible.

It was not simply that racism became more subtle or unconscious after its overt forms had been defeated. It was more that there was no longer a need to routinely make explicit assertions of racial superiority. Racial inequalities were reproduced through market systems, alongside newly intensifying infrastructures of governmental violence, carried out in the name of seemingly race-neutral concerns about crime, migration and terrorism. That Britain's immigration policy is also a racial segregation policy was illustrated again last year, when the government issued [238,562](#) visas to

white Ukrainians, while only about [5,000](#) of those fleeing wars in Syria and Afghanistan were offered safe passage to the UK.

The many millions of people around the world judged surplus to the requirements of neoliberal capitalism, and framed as bearers of cultural values antagonistic to market systems, are the targets of this form of violence. Fleeing the destruction of their countries, [more than 40,000](#) have died trying to enter Europe since 1993, mostly by drowning in the Mediterranean. This same disposable humanity has been slaughtered in the global wars on terror and drugs – with an estimated [3.6 million indirect deaths](#) in the post-9/11 war zones of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen, according to a Brown University study. Within the UK, [police violence](#) is directed most often at our own abandoned – disproportionately Black – populations.

Liberal antiracists are powerless against this new structural racism. They demand we use the correct racial vocabulary, shaming [Conservative MPs](#) or [sports commentators](#) when they use derogatory terms; but abolishing a word does not abolish the social forces it expresses. They implement diversity training programmes, but these fail, owing to the mistaken premise that racism now resides primarily in the unconscious mind. And they talk of “hate speech” and “hate crimes”, on the assumption that oppressive cruelty is the behavioural expression of a hateful disposition – ignoring the corporate executives, asset managers, lawmakers, government officials, judges, police officers, prison guards, military personnel and immigration officers who, without attitudes of hatred, routinely and calmly operate infrastructures of racist violence, in the name of security and profit. By relocating racism to the unconscious mind, to the use of inappropriate words and to the extremist fringes, liberal antiracists end up absolving the institutions most responsible for racist practices. They are effective at getting more people of colour into senior jobs in police forces, border agencies and the military, but unable to get fewer people of colour killed by those same agencies.

For these reasons, to look to liberal antiracism as the solution – with whatever good intentions – is to help sustain structural racism. White liberals can heroically confront their own unconscious biases all they want,

yet these structures will remain. To be antiracist today means working collectively with organisations to dismantle racist border, policing, carceral and military infrastructures. It means [organising in the community](#) to get the police out of our schools; taking [direct action](#) against deportations; and [confronting](#) corporations that trade in violence. It means understanding that the poor of the global south are as equally entitled to the world's resources as the wealthy residents of the north. In the end, it requires us to build an economy of care, not killing – uplifting all working classes of whatever colour. The radical tradition, with its anticapitalist impetus, might once have seemed impractical. Now it is the only viable antiracist politics.

- Arun Kundnani is the author of What is Antiracism? And Why it Means Anticapitalism
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our [letters](#) section, please [click here](#).***

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Research by a former competition economist at the European Commission shows the merger could lead to price hikes of £300 for every customer. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/EPA

[Vodafone](#)

Why UK must stop Vodafone-Three merger and this cycle of ‘greedflation’

Gail Cartmail

Evidence across world shows consolidation results in price hikes for consumers, job losses and big payouts for owners

[Mobile and broadband firms accused of fuelling ‘greedflation’](#)

Thu 29 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Fri 30 Jun 2023 10.27 EDT

Nearly one in three UK households are [struggling to pay for their phone or internet service](#), the highest level on record. Yet prices keep going up: this year, mobile phone providers hit users with [inflation-busting price hikes](#) of more than 17%.

This will only get worse if regulators approve the merger of Vodafone and Three's UK operations, a move that would make the new company Britain's biggest mobile phone network. The slick media campaign promoting the deal says it would be "great for customers" and ["great for the country"](#).

The evidence suggests otherwise. The deal would reduce the number of mobile networks from four to three, and the experience in country after country shows less competition between operators equals higher prices for their customers.

Analysis by Unite, part of an [extensive research dossier](#) we have produced on the deal, has found telecoms prices in countries with three mobile phone operators are 20% higher than those with four. Similarly, [research](#) by Prof Tommaso Valletti, a former chief competition economist at the European Commission, shows that the merger could lead to price hikes of £300 for every customer.

The deal is unlikely to bring the increased investment its backers claim. When Vodafone and Three merged with TPG in Australia in 2020, they [claimed](#) it would accelerate "the benefits of substantial network investments made by both companies". The reality? Investment levels across the sector are down 45%, according to Unite's analysis. The same wasn't true for prices: within a year, some plans were hiked by up to A\$40 (£21) a month.

Dividends paid out to shareholders jumped from £12m in the two years before the merger to £340m in the two years after.

When a merger reduced the number of mobile phone operators from four to three in Norway, corporate earnings doubled.

Let's not forget that these payouts are likely to come on the back of job losses. Our research suggests the Vodafone-Three merger could cost up to 1,600 UK jobs – that's on top of the [11,000 Vodafone is already slashing globally](#).

This will be just another example of the corporate "greedflation" driving the cost of living crisis. In February 2022, Vodafone's then chief executive, Nick

Read, was quoted as [saying](#): “We feel the UK needs to consolidate to give [us] industrial scale so we can improve returns.”

For far too long, government and regulators have allowed corporations like these to shape this country to suit themselves.

Three is owned by CK Hutchison Group, a huge, sprawling Hong Kong-based conglomerate founded by the billionaire Li Ka-shing, one of the wealthiest people in the world. CK already makes huge profits from the UK, through a range of businesses including Superdrug, Northumbrian Water and Greene King. Its energy distribution company UK Power Networks is the largest in the country and has raked in an estimated [£2.4bn in profits](#) in the last four years, much of that paid out to CK in dividends.

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Regulators have done little to intervene. CK and [Vodafone](#) will use their influence and access to government to push for the merger to be cleared.

We must make sure this doesn't become yet another handout to shareholders at the UK public's expense. That's why Unite is [campaigning](#) against this merger. We need to bring this deal out of the backrooms and into the light. We are building a cross-party coalition in parliament and this will only grow

in the coming weeks as the dangers of the merger become apparent. We will also be reaching out to consumer allies to support our campaign.

The regulator, the Competition and Market Authority, must step in to prevent this damaging merger and stop this endless cycle of greedflation. It's time for government and regulators in this country to start serving the public, not the interests of profiteering corporations and their owners.

* Gail Cartmail is executive head of operations at the [Unite](#) trade union

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The latest data shows that up to April 2022 there is £943m in matured CTFs that is unclaimed Photograph: joebelanger/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Opinion](#)**Child trust funds**

Young people! Could thousands of pounds be sitting in a bank account with your name on it?

[Rajiv Prabhakar](#)



In these hard times, the government should be doing more to reunite child trust fund account holders with their cash

Thu 29 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 13.55 EDT

Imagine that you are about to turn 18 and there is £2,000 sitting in a bank account on your birthday. What would you do with it? Spend it on a laptop, clothes for work or save it for a rainy day? But there's a catch: you don't know the money is there and so you do not get it.

This may be the case for thousands of young people today. The latest data on child trust funds (CTFs) up to April 2022 shows that there is £943m in matured CTFs lying unclaimed or untransferred.

CTFs were introduced by a [Labour government in 2002](#). All babies in the UK born between 1 September 2002 and 2 January 2011 received an endowment of £250 (or £50 if they were born from August 2010) from the government into an 18-year account. Children from a low-income background received an extra £250. Family and friends could save up to £1,200 a year and once the account matured, when the person turned 18, they could use the money however they pleased. The policy was [axed in](#)

[2011](#) by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in its first wave of austerity cuts to public spending.

The child trust fund succeeded in ensuring children born between 2002 and 2010 all have some money. This should be set against a background where large parts of the population have little or no savings. Research from the Money & Pensions Service shows that [nine million people](#), or one in six UK adults, have no savings at all.

Official figures show that as of April 2022, the average market value of CTFs was just over £2,000. Having £2,000 at 18 years old is certainly a useful foundation for later life. There were debates about whether young people would blow the money on wild parties. But the young people I interviewed at the time were more likely to say that they would use the money to spend on things such as driving lessons, which could help them with a job. If this policy was such a success in saving money, why has it failed to deliver these funds into the hands of so many young people?

When the CTF was first introduced there was a debate about whether these grants should be paid at birth or when the person turned 18. Providing it at birth resonated with those who wanted a basic capital and it may have been easier to communicate. But those who wanted to use the grant to help young people build a savings habit over the 18 years of the account prevailed.

Providing money to 18-year-olds may have been more politically palatable, but it also stored up challenges for the policy. Its axing in 2010 meant that opportunities for the government to nudge young people to engage with their accounts were lost.

Steps have already been taken to help young people locate their CTF. HMRC has had an [online tool](#) since 2013 allowing young people to check whether they have a CTF. In 2019, HMRC began to notify 15-year-olds that they might have a CTF in the letter it sends to teenagers notifying them of their national insurance number as they approach 16 years of age. The Share Foundation is a charity that manages CTFs for young people who are, or have been, in local authority care and also has an [online search tool](#). However, the large number of unclaimed accounts suggests that [more may need to be done](#) to reach young people.

Furthermore, if a parent or guardian did not open a CTF, then the government opened an account on the child's behalf. These are known as stakeholder accounts that invest in stocks and shares, and providers charge fees to run these accounts. A member of the current Commons public accounts committee inquiry into child trust funds has asked if some providers have much incentive in reconnecting young people to unclaimed accounts as providers still receive fees for running them regardless.

Providing people with extra money is often touted as a response to cost-of-living challenges. It is usually hard politically to get agreement to do this. But in the case of the CTF, the money is [already sitting there](#) and much of it is untouched – the government just needs to find a way to reconnect young people with their cash.

- Dr Rajiv Prabhakar is a senior lecturer at the Open University and author of Financial Inclusion: Critique and Alternatives

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2023.06.29 - Around the world

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- [Malta Law passed allowing abortion only when woman's life is at risk](#)
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Debris from the Titan submersible is unloaded in St John's, Newfoundland, on Wednesday. Photograph: Paul Daly/AP

[Titanic sub incident](#)

Presumed human remains recovered from within Titan wreckage, US Coast Guard says

Pieces of mangled craft brought ashore in Newfoundland, Canada, after five killed on voyage to Titanic wreck

[Dani Anguiano](#) and agency

Wed 28 Jun 2023 19.25 EDTFirst published on Wed 28 Jun 2023 12.18 EDT

Presumed human remains have been recovered from within the wreckage of the Titan, the submersible that imploded on a voyage to the Titanic earlier this month, the US Coast Guard reported on Wednesday.

The Coast Guard will transport the evidence recovered from the North Atlantic to a US port where medical professionals will conduct a formal

analysis of the remains, officials said.

“The evidence will provide investigators from several international jurisdictions with critical insights into the cause of this tragedy. There is still a substantial amount of work to be done to understand the factors that led to the catastrophic loss of the Titan and help ensure a similar tragedy does not occur again,” said Jason Neubauer, a chair captain with the Marine Board of Investigation.

The news came nearly a week after authorities announced they had found the wreckage of the craft, which disappeared while attempting to descend to the Titanic wreck two miles below the surface, following an international search and rescue effort. The five crew members onboard the submersible were probably killed instantly in a “catastrophic implosion”, the Coast Guard said last week.

Pieces of the mangled craft were brought ashore in Newfoundland, [Canada](#), on Wednesday morning, evidence that officials said would assist in an investigation into the tragedy and answer questions about the craft’s experimental design, safety standards and lack of certification.

Large pieces of metal resembling parts of the Titan’s white hull and landing skids, designed for touching down on the seabed, arrived in St John’s on Wednesday, via the Horizon Arctic, a Canadian ship.

Twisted cables and other items probably involved in the mechanics of the 22ft (6.7-meter) submersible were among the wreckage recovered from the craft, which was launched from a ship on 18 June , and lost contact with the surface one hour and 45 minutes later.

Retrieving the debris is a key part of [the investigation](#) to establish what went wrong. Industry experts have long had doubts about the design of the craft and raised questions about the safety record of OceanGate, the US company that operated the submersible.



Debris from the Titan submersible is seen in St John's on Wednesday.
Photograph: Paul Daly/AP

Prior to the wreckage being found on the ocean floor, not far from the Titanic wreck itself, the world had waited with bated breath for news of the vessel. Many millions tuned in to media coverage to see if the sub would be found before its oxygen supplies depleted.

Horizon Arctic used a remotely operated vehicle, or ROV, to search the ocean floor near the Titanic wreck for pieces of the submersible. Pelagic Research Services, a company with offices in Massachusetts and New York that owns the ROV, said in a statement on Wednesday that it had completed offshore operations.

Pelagic Research Services said its team was “still on mission” and could not comment on the Titan investigation, which involves several government agencies in the US and Canada.

“They have been working around the clock now for 10 days, through the physical and mental challenges of this operation, and are anxious to finish the mission and return to their loved ones,” the company’s statement said.

One of the experts the Coast Guard consulted with during the search said analyzing the physical material of recovered debris could reveal important

clues about what happened to the Titan. And there could be electronic data, said Carl Hartsfield of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

“Certainly all the instruments on any deep sea vehicle, they record data. They pass up data. So the question is, is there any data available? And I really don’t know the answer to that question,” he said on Monday.

The National Transportation Safety Board has said the Coast Guard has declared the loss of the Titan submersible to be a “major marine casualty” and the Coast Guard will lead the investigation.

OceanGate is based in the US and OceanGate Expeditions, a related company that led the Titan’s dives to the Titanic, is registered in the Bahamas. The company closed when the Titan was found.

Meanwhile, the Titan’s mother ship, the Polar Prince, was from Canada, and [those killed](#) were from England, Pakistan, France and the US. The five were the OceanGate CEO and pilot, Stockton Rush; two members of a prominent Pakistani family, Shahzada Dawood and his son Suleman; British adventurer Hamish Harding; and French Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.

This article was amended on 29 June 2023 to clarify that OceanGate Expeditions, a subsidiary of OceanGate, was registered as a company in the Bahamas. An earlier version incorrectly said that the Titan submersible was registered in the Bahamas.

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Activists hold up banners in English and Maltese reading ‘I decide’, ‘Abortion is a woman’s right’, and ‘Abortion is healthcare, not a crime’ outside the country’s courts in Valletta. Photograph: Kevin Schembri Orland/AP

[Malta](#)

Malta to allow abortion but only when woman’s life is at risk

Watered-down law passed which says three specialists must agree that a termination is necessary

AP in Valletta

Wed 28 Jun 2023 15.53 EDT

Maltese lawmakers have unanimously approved legislation to ease the strictest abortion laws in the EU, voting to allow terminations – but only in cases where a woman’s life is at risk.

Ahead of the vote on Wednesday, pro-choice campaigners withdrew their support, saying last-minute changes make the legislation “vague, unworkable and even dangerous”.

The original bill [allowing access to abortion if a pregnant woman's life or health is in danger](#) was hailed as a step in the right direction for Malta, a majority-Catholic country. It was introduced last November after an American tourist who miscarried had to be [airlifted off the Mediterranean island nation to be treated](#).

Under the amendments, however, a risk to health is not enough. A woman must be at risk of death to access an abortion, and then only after three specialists consent. The new legislation allows a doctor to terminate a pregnancy without specialist consultation only if the mother's life is at immediate risk.

Thousands of Maltese protested against the law during demonstrations in December. The governing Labor party, which submitted the original bill, supported the amendments, while the opposition agreed to support it after the changes.

The Voices for Choice coalition withdrew its support last week, calling the amendments “a betrayal”.

The coalition of 14 pro-choice groups said the requirement for three specialists for women whose health is at risk was “unworkable and dangerous”.

Malta had been the only EU nation to have prohibited abortion for any reason, punishable by up to three years in prison to have the procedure or up to four years to assist a woman in having an abortion.

The law is rarely enforced, the last known case of someone being jailed was in 1980. However, [a woman was charged under the anti-abortion law this month](#) but not jailed.

San Marino decriminalised abortion last year and other majority-Catholic countries such as Ireland and Italy have legalised it.

In 2021 Poland introduced a near-total ban on abortion, except when a woman's life or health is in danger or if the pregnancy results from rape or incest. The proposed Maltese legislation does not provide an exception for rape or incest.

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In a 2016 photo, the owner of a bookshop in Islamabad shows a copy of a 1985 issue of National Geographic with a cover photo of Sharbat Gula, an Afghan refugee. Photograph: BK Bangash/AP

[US press and publishing](#)

National Geographic reportedly lays off its last staff writers

Nineteen staffers affected, according to Washington Post, with celebrated magazine to end newsstand sales

[Aben  Clayton](#)

Wed 28 Jun 2023 21.48 EDTLast modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 12.28 EDT

National Geographic has reportedly laid off its last staff writers and will no longer be sold on US newsstands.

Nineteen editorial staffers were affected by the layoffs, the [Washington Post reported](#), and several staffers confirmed the news on Twitter.

“I’ve been so lucky. I got to work w/incredible journalists and tell important, global stories. It’s been an honor,” [tweeted Craig Welch](#), one of National Geographic’s now former senior writers. The journalist Doug Main said on [Twitter](#) on Tuesday: “National Geographic is laying off its staff writers, including me.”

The organization’s future editorial work will instead be done by freelance writers and the few editors remaining on staff, the [Post reported](#). As part of the cost-cutting measures instituted by the publication’s parent company, Disney, the magazine, with its memorable yellow border, will no longer be available on newsstands in the US as of next year, the newspaper reported.

National Geographic told media outlets, however, that some writers would remain on staff. In a statement, a spokesperson for the magazine said: “National Geographic will continue to publish a monthly magazine that is dedicated to exceptional multi-platform storytelling with cultural impact. Staffing changes will not change our ability to do this work, but rather give us more flexibility to tell different stories and meet our audiences where they are across our many platforms. Any insinuation that the recent changes will negatively impact the magazine, or the quality of our storytelling, is simply incorrect.”

This news comes amid a series of large layoffs that have shaken the media industry in recent months. In late November, CNN began laying off hundreds of staffers across different areas of the company. This was the second round of layoffs the company conducted last year after it shelved its \$100m streaming platform CNN+ just three weeks after its debut, affecting 350 employees.

In December 2022, Jonah Peretti, the CEO of BuzzFeed, announced that 12% of the digital media company’s staff, nearly 200 people, would be dismissed. The announcement caused the once ubiquitous company’s stock to hit an all-time low at \$1.06 a share.

Vice Media, which operates online and broadcast platforms, laid off about a dozen employees and in May of this year filed for bankruptcy. This move appeared to be the death knell for Vice, which cut [250 roles in 2019](#).

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In the offending scene, a female dolphin is targeted by a pack of male dolphins that mate with her. Photograph: AP

[New Zealand](#)

New Zealand broadcaster reprimanded over ‘graphic’ dolphin mating scene

Nature series *Our Big Blue Backyard* drew one complaint to media watchdog that it should not have given the program a G, or general, classification

Australian Associated Press

Thu 29 Jun 2023 01.43 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Jun 2023 11.13 EDT

New Zealand’s media watchdog has reprimanded public broadcaster TVNZ for not giving a higher classification to a documentary with “dramatised” scenes of dolphin mating.

The nature series *Our Big Blue Backyard* drew the ire of one viewer who successfully complained to the Broadcasting Standards Authority (BSA). In

the offending scene, a female dolphin is targeted by a pack of male dolphins that mate with her.

“She’s trapped at the surface, and the males take turns. Once they’ve all mated with her, they leave her alone,” the narrator says, accompanied by underwater footage of the encounter and dramatic music.

The BSA said the footage included “the male dolphins swarming around the female with their genitalia visible, and at one point a male visibly entered the female ... accompanied by audio of dolphin cries”.

Viewer Chris Radford appealed to the BSA that TVNZ should not have aired the program at 7.30pm with a G, or general, classification.

“While the behaviour may have been natural, it was still a kind of sexual violence inflicted upon the female dolphin,” he argued in his submission. “The poor creature was trying to flee from the male dolphins.

“It is clear that this is a situation where further counselling will be required for young children regarding the behaviour observed.”

TVNZ argued it was factual, educational, was not unduly dramatised and should not be considered akin to human sexual violence.

“Such an assessment reflects a judgment predicated on human sensibilities which, as above, we do not consider are an appropriate framework for understanding animal behaviour,” their response said.

The BSA ruled in favour of Radford, finding the program should have been given a PG rating recommending parental guidance.

“The authority found the scene went beyond audience expectations of the programme’s ‘G’ rating as it featured mature themes, graphic images, and was dramatised in such a way that it may have been alarming or distressing for any children watching, and required adult supervision and guidance,” the ruling read.

The BSA cited research into children's viewing habits which identified "animal harm or torture as one of the most common types of content that children found upsetting".

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A study of more than 20,000 Australians over the age of 60 found that the rate of heart attack was 19% lower in the group that took a vitamin D supplement. Photograph: Oleg Breslavtsev/Getty Images

[Medical research](#)

Vitamin D supplements may cut risk of heart attacks, trial suggests

The largest study of its kind may prove a link between vitamin D levels and the risk of cardiovascular disease

[Andrew Gregory](#) *Health editor*

[@andrewgregory](#)

Wed 28 Jun 2023 18.30 EDTLast modified on Wed 28 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

Vitamin D supplements may cut the risk of serious cardiovascular events such as heart attacks in older people, according to the largest study of its kind.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is one of the main causes of death globally. The number of cardiovascular events is predicted to surge as populations continue to age and chronic diseases become more common.

Observational studies have consistently shown a link between vitamin D levels and the risk of CVD. However, randomised controlled trials previously found no evidence that supplements prevented cardiovascular events, possibly due to differences in trial design that can affect results.

Now a randomised controlled trial involving more than 21,000 people aged over 60 suggests vitamin D supplements could reduce the risk of major cardiovascular events. The findings have been published in the peer-reviewed journal The BMJ.

The researchers stressed that the absolute risk difference was small, but said this was the largest trial of its kind to date and that further evaluation was now warranted.

“These findings indicate that vitamin D supplementation might reduce the incidence of major cardiovascular events,” the Australian authors wrote. More trials were needed, but they said it suggested previous thinking that vitamin D supplements do not alter CVD risk was “premature”.

The study, which was led by the QIMR Berghofer medical research institute in Queensland as part of its population health programme, was carried out between 2014 and 2020 and involved 21,315 Australians aged 60 to 84 who randomly received a vitamin D supplement or placebo taken orally at the beginning of each month for up to five years.

During the trial, 1,336 people experienced a major cardiovascular event – 6.6% in the placebo group and 6% in the vitamin D group.

The rate of major cardiovascular events was 9% lower in the vitamin D group compared with the placebo group, equivalent to 5.8 fewer events per 1,000 participants. The rate of heart attack was 19% lower in the vitamin D group. There was no difference in stroke risk between the two groups.

Overall, the researchers calculated that 172 people would need to take monthly vitamin D supplements to prevent one major cardiovascular event.

The researchers acknowledged limitations of the trial and said the findings may not apply to other populations. However, this was a large trial with extremely high retention and adherence, and almost complete data on cardiovascular events and mortality outcomes.

Vitamin D helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. These nutrients are needed to keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. In the UK, government advice is that everyone should consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement during the autumn and winter.

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Headlines tuesday 27 june 2023

- ['Racist, sexist and elitist' Landmark report's damning verdict on English cricket](#)
- ['Not just a few bad apples' ICEC report key findings](#)
- [Q&A What does it mean for the game?](#)

'The culture is rotten': report finds English cricket is racist, sexist and elitist – video

[Cricket](#)

English cricket is ‘racist, sexist and elitist’, says landmark report

- Independent Commission finds problems ‘widespread’
- ECB chair recognises need for significant reform

[Sean Ingle](#) *Chief sports reporter*

[@seaningle](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 19.01 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 09.06 EDT

English cricket suffers from “widespread and deep-rooted” racism, sexism, elitism and class-based discrimination at all levels of the game and urgently needs reform, a landmark report [has found](#).

[The 317-page report](#) from the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (Icec), which drew on evidence from more than 4,000 players, coaches, administrators and fans, also urges the sport to also face up to the fact “that it’s not banter or just a few bad apples” causing the problems.

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Thank you for your feedback.

The England and Wales [Cricket](#) Board responded to the report by issuing an unreserved apology for its failure to adequately tackle discrimination and said the findings were “a seminal moment” for the sport. It pledged to respond to 44 recommendations made by Icec within three months.

However Cindy Butts, the Icec chair, said that fundamental change was quickly needed. “Our findings are unequivocal,” she said. “Discrimination is

both overt and baked into the structures and processes within cricket. The stark reality is cricket is not a game for everyone.

“Racism, class-based discrimination, elitism and sexism are widespread and deep rooted. The game must face up to the fact that it’s not banter or just a few bad apples.”

The report, which amounts to one of the [most devastating_published_critiques](#) of a British sports body, lays bare the extent of the game’s failings, including:

Racism is “entrenched” in cricket. “It is not confined to ‘pockets’,” the report states, “nor is it limited to individual incidents of misconduct.” The Icec found that 87% of people of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage who responded to its survey, along with 82% of Indian and 75% of Black respondents, said they had experienced discrimination.

[Women are marginalised](#) and routinely experience sexism and misogyny – with women’s teams “frequently demeaned, stereotyped and treated as second-class”. As the report also points out, the England women’s team are yet to play a Test at Lord’s, the home of cricket.

Cricket is “elitist and exclusionary” – with “private school and ‘old boys’ networks’ and cliques permeate the game to the exclusion of many”. The report also cites stories of children from state schools being called “peasants” or having their working class accent mimicked.

A “drinking and puerile lads’ culture” across the sport that puts women at risk of unwanted attention and acts as a barrier to the inclusion of Muslim communities.

A complaints system that is confusing, overtly defensive and not fit for purpose. The report says that victims often “suffer in silence” because they feel that no action will be taken if they report abuse.

The report also criticises the [ECB](#) for failing to recognise the extent of racism in cricket until more recently, when the former Yorkshire player Azeem Rafiq laid bare the abuse he had endured playing the game. And it

questions why the sport's governing body failed to take any steps to address the drop-off of black players, or the significant underrepresentation in professional cricket of those who attend state school.



Azeem Rafiq has spoken out about the racism he has endured. Photograph: Allan McKenzie/SWPix.com/REX/Shutterstock

“At the playing level, private school educated players are disproportionately represented, to a significant extent, in England’s national teams, both men and women, compared with the general population,” the report reads. “Diversity of ethnic background has also decreased in the men’s professional game over the last 30 years, and has never been high in the women’s game.”

The Icc’s 44 recommendations range from the modest to the radical. They include a number of measures to tackle racism, sexism and elitism, as well as calls for regular “culture” checks to ensure genuine change. “Cricket must not find itself in the same position in another two years’ time let alone another twenty,” the report states.

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The Icec report also calls for an independent regulator, to ensure that the ECB no longer has a conflict of interest in acting as both a promoter and regulator.

Meanwhile in a suggestion that will have some traditionalists frothing it also calls on the [annual Harrow versus Eton match](#), as well as the Varsity game between Oxford versus Cambridge, be replaced by a state school under-15s competition and a finals' day for university teams, to indicate that the sport is becoming more inclusive.

“Some people may roll their eyes at the perceived ‘wokeness’ of this work,” the report states. “However, as much as the word may have been weaponized in recent years, taking on a pejorative meaning, we consider – and it is often defined as such – that being ‘woke’ or doing ‘woke work’ simply means being alive to injustice.”

Butts is a former commissioner at the Criminal Cases Review Commission and was deputy chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority. She is also a trustee of the football anti-racism charity Kick it Out. The report includes a foreword by the former Conservative prime minister Sir John Major.

Some recommendations – including significantly raising the opportunities for state school players – may prove economically challenging. The commission also notes that in 2021 England's men cricketers received 13 times the amount paid to England's women players, and suggests there should be equal pay at domestic level by 2029 and international level by 2030, which also may be difficult to achieve.

The report recognises the bravery of the ECB in commissioning the report in March 2021, and acknowledges the game has made some sizeable improvements recently, particularly in attracting more girls and women players. It also accepts that the problems it identifies are “not, sadly, unique to cricket” and are often indicative of “deeply rooted societal problems”.

However the ECB chair, Richard Thompson, said he recognised that the game had to do far more to significantly reform. “Cricket should be a game for everyone, and we know that this has not always been the case,” he said.

“Powerful conclusions within the report also highlight that for too long women and black people were neglected. We are truly sorry for this. I am determined that this wake-up call for cricket in England and Wales should not be wasted.”

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'The culture is rotten': report finds English cricket is racist, sexist and elitist – video

[Cricket](#)

[Explainer](#)

Digested: the damning ICEC report's key findings and recommendations

The Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket has delivered its 317-page report. Here are the main takeaways ...

[James Wallace](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 19.01 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 09.07 EDT

A deep-seated issue of racism continues in cricket

The report's overview is damning. It states that racism in cricket is not confined to "pockets" or "a few bad apples" and neither is it limited to individual incidents of misconduct.

"The evidence is unequivocal: racism is a serious issue in cricket."

"Racism, in all its forms, continues to shape the experience of, and opportunities for, many in the game." **Page 10**

Racism normalised and lack of trust in reporting discrimination

[The report states](#) that "50% of respondents described experiencing discrimination in the previous five years" and that "the figures were substantially higher for people from ethnically diverse communities: 87% of people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage, 82% of people with Indian heritage and 75% of all Black respondents". **Page 11**

When outlining the complaints procedure in Chapter 8 of the report, the authors quote a high level of dissatisfaction with the process when people reported discrimination, whereby only 18% of those who had complained were satisfied, reducing to 9% of complaints by ethnically diverse people. **Page 190**

Lack of representation and structural barriers

The report states: “In cricket’s most senior leadership, South Asian representation is limited to 2.8% despite South Asians making up 26-29% of the game’s adult recreational population and 6.9% of the population of England and Wales.” **Page 59**

Statistics imply that in total, ethnically diverse representation comprises only 5.6% of leadership in cricket, while comprising 18.3% of the English and Wales population and in the region of 30-35% of recreational cricket players.

“The ethnicity of male and female players at professional level does not reflect the ethnicity of the adult recreational playing base, nor the wider population of England and Wales.” **Page 11**

There has been a decline “in Black British male professional players of around 75%”. **Page 69**

The report also indicated that female cricketers playing at domestic professional level are disproportionately white: in 2021, there were only two Black British, four mixed/multiple ethnicity and eight South Asian female players, out of a total of 161. **Page 11**

Cricket has failed Black communities

The report states “The decline in Black cricket in England and Wales has been well documented and subject to much public debate for many years.”

“Whilst there has been some recent and welcome recognition by the [ECB](#) that Black communities need targeted interventions, we found it deeply concerning and surprising that we could identify no evidence of direct ECB-

led activity to understand, halt or reverse this decline since the ECB's formation in 1997." **Page 12**

In analysing the ECB's Inspiring Generations and South Asian Action Plan policies, the report "rejects the notion that the ECB has no option but to prioritise South Asian [Cricket](#) over and above Black cricket". **Page 122**

ECB's response has been slow

The report states: "The ECB's efforts to address the challenges of equity, diversity and inclusion in cricket only gained real momentum in 2018, nearly 19 years after the 1999 'Clean Bowl Racism' report concluded that racism existed in cricket." **Page 12**

The report also rebukes the governing body for its overemphasis on good PR in terms of the speed of implementing its 12-point plan in November 2021 only 10 days after Azeem Rafiq appeared in front of the digital, culture, media and sport select committee. **Page 116**

Recommendations to improve racial equity include

The ECB to publish updated State of Equity in Cricket report every three years.

Within six months the ECB should put in place mandatory specialist training for racial literacy among its leadership and establish an executive-level chief equity diversity and inclusion office role with sufficient resource.

Over the next 12 months commission a study into the decline of cricket in Black communities, increase funding for the ACE Programme and identify and support Black-led cricket clubs across England and Wales.

Women seen as an 'add-on' to the game

The report states: "Women are not even nearly on an equal footing with men within the sport today. Our evidence shows that women continue to be treated as subordinate to men within, and at all levels of, cricket. This is evident both from the lived experience of professional and recreational

women cricketers and from the structural barriers that women continue to face.”



England celebrate a wicket in the Women’s Ashes series. They are paid 20% of the salaries of the men’s team. Photograph: Matt West/Shutterstock

“The women’s game lacks proper representation amongst the highest level of decision-makers within cricket.” **Page 13**

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Unequal treatment and pay for women

“Women receive an embarrassingly small amount compared to men ... the average salary for England Women is 20.6% of the average salary for England Men. **Page 78**

The report goes on to talk about the differing levels of investment in that in 2021 for every £1 the ECB spent on England women’s teams it spent £5 on the men’s teams and that in overall remuneration England men received 13 times the amount paid to England women. **Pages 78-79**

The report also states that there are “significant levels” of inequity in the availability of kit and in the number of grounds and facilities for women and girls. The report is also damning of the fact that England Women have yet to play a Test at Lord’s. **Page 13**

A culture of sexism

The report states that it has heard evidence of “a widespread culture of sexism and misogyny, and unacceptable behaviour towards women in both the recreational and professional game”. **Page 14**

In terms of culture, among multiple criticisms of a laddish drinking culture, anecdotal evidence supplied in the report referred to “predatory behaviour” and the report said it had received “some disturbing examples of the conduct and attitude of men towards women, often fuelled by alcohol”. **Page 94**

Key recommendations to improve equity for women

Overhaul of women’s pay structure to ensure equal pay at domestic level by 2020 and at international level by 2030.

Match fees for England men and women to be made equal immediately.

As part of governance structure overhaul, women’s game should have equal representation to the men’s game including direct representation on par with first-class counties, not indirectly through the FCCs.

Articles of Association amended with specific obligation to promote and develop women's and girl's cricket.

Elitism reigns

The report states that there is “a prevalence of elitism and class-based discrimination in cricket. Much of this is, we believe, structural and institutional in nature, driven partly by the lack of access to cricket in state schools and the way in which the talent pathway is structurally bound up with private schools”.



Eton schoolboys cheer from the grandstand as Harrow bat during their cricket match at Lord's in May. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

It quotes the statistic that the percentage of privately educated male England players was 57% in 2012, and 58% in 2021 – “significantly higher than the 7% of the general population who are privately educated”.

“The scarce provision of cricket in state schools, the widespread links between cricket and private schools, the cost and time associated with playing youth cricket, the lack of a systematic, contextual process for talent identification, and the relative absence of diversity amongst coaches on the

talent pathway: these are all important factors which present significant barriers to an equitable system.” **Page 15**

In statistical analysis the report focuses on pathways and costs; with one parent reporting it cost more than £7,000 a year to keep two daughters in the system in terms of lost work and costs. **Pages 226-227**

Further studies quoted in the report showed privately educated white British cricketers were 13 times more likely to become professional cricketers than their state educated counterparts while private school children were 2.5 times more likely to take part in cricket in an average week. **Page 231**

Key recommendations to remove class barriers include

Nominations system by schools/clubs to be abolished and replaced by open trials.

Participation in talent pathway should be made free of direct costs charged by counties.

ECB should introduce county and national level T20 competitions for state boys and girls’ teams at U14 and U15 age group. National finals day to replace annual Eton v Harrow match at Lord’s.

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'The culture is rotten': report finds English cricket is racist, sexist and elitist – video

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Holding Up a Mirror to Cricket Q&A: what does it mean for the game?

[Sean Ingle](#)

What is [the 317-page Icec report](#), who authored it and what else does the commission want cricket to do?

Mon 26 Jun 2023 19.01 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 09.05 EDT

What is the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket report?

In March 2021 the English and Wales [Cricket](#) Board asked an independent panel to examine discrimination and inequity in cricket in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and a consequent renewed focus on the Black Lives Matter movement. Eight months later the former Yorkshire cricketer Azeem Rafiq gave testimony to the culture, media and sport select committee about abuse he said he had endured in the sport which threw the issue further into the spotlight and led to the Icec receiving so much evidence it delayed their report by several months.

What are the report's key findings?

Across 317 pages [of its landmark report](#), Icec warns that racism is “entrenched in English cricket”, says that women and women’s teams are “frequently demeaned, stereotyped and treated as second-class”, and tells the ECB board that it must “urgently address deep rooted and widespread institutional, structural and interpersonal discrimination across the game”.

And it is also critical of the way the game discriminates against working class players?

Correct. The report, *Holding Up A Mirror to Cricket*, says the sport is “elitist and exclusionary”, with those from lower-class backgrounds often facing barriers they cannot overcome as “private school and ‘old boys’ networks’ and cliques permeate the game to the exclusion of many”. At the same time, it does acknowledge that recent initiatives, such as the South Asian Action Plan and the Transforming Women’s and Girls’ Cricket Action Plan have had a positive impact across the game.

How did the Icec reach its findings?

It started by asking people to describe their experiences in cricket in an online survey in late 2021, which received more than 4,000 replies. The commission then supplemented this with written and oral evidence from hundreds of players, counties, women’s regional teams and other organisations linked to cricket. The Icec says many of the findings of the survey alone were eye-opening. For instance, 87% of people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage said they had experienced discrimination in the game in the past five years, with 82% of Indian heritage and 75% of all Black respondents saying the same.

Does the report also question cricket’s broader culture too?

It does. The commission cites numerous examples of a racist, misogynistic, homophobic comments at all levels, as well as a “laddish” drinking culture that can alienate women, children and people from ethnically diverse communities. It also says that “overt discrimination often goes without serious challenge” and that the game’s complaints system “is not fit for purpose”.

Who was on the Icec panel?

The commission is chaired by Cindy Butts, who was previously the deputy of chair of the Metropolitan Police Authority, and comprises four members: Zafar Ansari, a former Surrey and England cricketer; Sir Brendan Barber, former general secretary of the Trades Union Congress; Dr Michael Collins, a professor of modern British history at University College London; and Michelle Moore, who has worked across sport, government and education.

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What recommendations does the report make?

The commission makes 44 recommendations to transform cricket's culture and governance including that, as a first step, the [ECB](#) makes an unqualified public apology. The ECB has now done that. In a statement Richard Thompson, the ECB chair, said: "On behalf of the ECB and wider leadership of the game, I apologise unreservedly to anyone who has ever been excluded from cricket or made to feel like they don't belong. Cricket should be a game for everyone, and we know that this has not always been the case. I am determined that this is a wake-up call for cricket."

What else does the Icc want cricket to do?

The commission also suggests a range of proposals – some modest, some radical. It urges the ECB to transform its complaints procedure and develop ongoing “culture health checks” to monitor cricket’s progress in making reforms. More radically, it calls for there to be equal pay between men and women at domestic level by 2029 and at international level by 2030. And in a move that may upset traditionalists, it recommends to the MCC that the annual fixtures between Eton and Harrow, and Oxford and Cambridge are no longer played at Lord’s after 2023. Instead it calls for them to be replaced by national finals days for state school U15 competitions for boys and girls and a national finals day for competitions for men’s and women’s university teams.

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‘I try to push myself’ ... Tuppence Middleton. Make-up: Francesca Brazzo. Hair: Davide Barbieri. Styling: Holly White. Photograph: Joseph Sinclair/The Guardian

[Stage](#)

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‘I’ve become more fearless’: Tuppence Middleton on OCD, motherhood and playing Elizabeth Taylor

[Emine Saner](#)

The Downton Abbey actor loves to keep a low profile. So how does she feel about portraying one of Hollywood’s most glamorous and headline-grabbing stars – and writing a book about her own mental health?



[@eminesaner](#)

Tue 27 Jun 2023 05.00 EDT

For many actors, the thought of playing Elizabeth Taylor at the National Theatre would be unnerving enough. But for Tuppence Middleton, who hadn’t done much stage work, it must have felt even more daunting. Not least because the job came up just three months after the birth of her child. But Middleton likes a challenge, and you don’t turn down the chance to be directed by [Sam Mendes](#).

“I wasn’t really thinking about work at that point,” she says, “but I knew my daughter would be eight months by the time we started, so I thought, yes, that feels right. For a long time, before having a baby and before Covid, I’d wanted to do more theatre. But the right thing hadn’t come along, or I hadn’t gone up for much.”

[The Motive and the Cue](#), by Jack Thorne, centres on Richard Burton’s fraught rehearsals for the 1964 Broadway production of Hamlet. Johnny Flynn is Burton, and Mark Gatiss is his director, Sir John Gielgud (both brilliant). Middleton’s Taylor is the superstar who is bored and unfulfilled in a luxury hotel room, paparazzi in the street below, while her new husband, Burton, needles and humiliates the other members of the cast. In Mendes’ production, Taylor becomes the diplomatic go-between, smoothing relations – “the voice of reason”, as Middleton puts it. “She was much smarter than people gave her credit for.”

Middleton, 36, has had numerous film and TV roles, including an episode of Black Mirror, the BBC production of War and Peace, the Netflix sci-fi series Sense8 and both Downton Abbey films. Does she share Burton’s belief that theatre acting is somehow “proper”, the pinnacle of the profession?

She always admired stage actors, she says, “because I think it’s such a physical feat. It gives you a sense of discipline and respect for the other actors, and teaches you what it is to work collaboratively.” On a film or TV set, she explains, you don’t tend to get much rehearsal time, if any, and everything is ready to shoot once you turn up to do your lines.



Moving around each other like cats ... Middleton and Johnny Flynn (as Richard Burton) in *The Motive and the Cue*. Photograph: Mark Douet

We meet in a restaurant near the National [Theatre](#) in London – Middleton will be on stage in a few hours. She is warm – like her character – but, unlike Taylor, completely unstarry. It took a while to become Taylor, she says. “In the rehearsal room, broad daylight, we’re doing quite sexual stuff or dancing, and you just think: ‘I’m steeling myself to be Elizabeth.’ But then you build it up.” A padded bodysuit and corset created Taylor’s curves. “For me, that was important to get into a place where I felt totally comfortable with her body and how she moves and prowls.” She and Burton “move around each other like cats”.

Taylor was so unashamedly sexy, wasn’t she? Middleton points out it wasn’t about her body. “So much of sexiness is about confidence. I thought about what made her sexy – I think it was that self-knowledge, self-assuredness, confidence. I think from a young age [Taylor had been on screen since she was 12, starring in *National Velvet*], she was very secure. People felt that – it radiates off screen.” It was what Burton lacked, Middleton believes. And Taylor could laugh at herself. “She knows what people think of her, she’s not stupid, and she plays on that – she also just doesn’t give a shit what people think.”

There was so much written about Taylor, “and so much judgment of her”, particularly of her eight marriages (two of them to Burton). “She felt like she just married everyone she fell in love with. Unless you’re with your high-school sweetheart, then if you marry everyone you fall in love with, you might have eight husbands. She was just, I think, at the heart of it a total romantic.” A strange combination, Middleton adds, “of being totally down-to-earth, generous, and in touch with her roots, but at the same time she had that wildly luxurious life and an appetite for everything – sex, jewellery, food at points in her life, drink”.

The sold-out play finishes in a couple of weeks, but will begin another West End run in December. Taylor, Middleton thinks, will be one of those characters that stays with her. “There’s a lot to be learned from her – her sense of self, and her big-heartedness. It coincided with a time in my life where, having a baby, having been through Covid, and re-evaluating what I want for my career, I felt like I’d never really considered myself a grown-up until quite recently.” She laughs. “I felt like Elizabeth was a part of that transition.”



Middleton as Lucy in Downton Abbey. Photograph: Collection Christophel/Alamy

Middleton grew up in Bristol, where school plays, local panto and a period in the Bristol Old Vic youth theatre intensified her desire to become an actor. She applied to Rada but didn't get in, though it didn't knock her confidence. "You have that naivety of youth – you just think: 'Oh, I'll just go to [another drama school] then.'" So she moved to London anyway, and went to ArtsEd for her drama degree.

It was being out of work during the pandemic that really highlighted to Middleton that as an actor, "you're really at the mercy of a lot of other people. You wait for someone to call you and say there's this audition, or this job. That made me think: how do you take control of that?" She had always wanted to write and direct, and she wrote a screenplay, an adaptation of *Not Before Sundown*, a fantasy book by the Finnish writer Johanna Sinisalo, which she is now developing and hopes to direct. She is also writing a book, something she'd always wanted to do; it's a memoir about her experience of living with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). "I thought: what am I waiting for? Whose affirmation am I waiting for? If you do it and it doesn't work out, then at least you tried it. I felt like I was being creative on my own terms."

Last year, Middleton made [a series for BBC Radio 4 about OCD](#). She is torn between being a naturally private person and wanting to talk about it and raise awareness – it would have helped her, she says, when she was younger. OCD, she points out, is one of the few mental health conditions that is "made light of. I think that's because it's quite hard to define because it's such a broad spectrum of different behaviours and obsessions." On film and TV, it tends to be someone who likes cleaning, or tidying, "so they're easy to make fun of, I suppose. But when it causes people that amount of stress, it's really unfair. I think that's because it still feels like unknown territory, whereas most people have an idea of what they think depression or anxiety is." With her book, she says: "Obviously, I only have my experience of it, and that's definitely not going to be everyone's experience, but I would have been really interested to hear one experience of it when I was growing up."

The condition is characterised by obsessive thoughts and repetitive behaviours. For some people with OCD, the thoughts can be incredibly distressing, and both thoughts and compulsions can be disruptive to the point where people can't work or maintain relationships. For Middleton, her OCD

usually manifests in performing routines, mental counting, and also emetophobia, or a fear of vomiting.

It started as a child; she remembers going to bed one evening, and her mother coming up to see why she wasn't asleep and discovering her at the doorway to her bedroom looking at anything with a corner for a count of eight. She was diagnosed with OCD by a doctor (who suggested medication, though Middleton didn't want to take it), "and kind of just coped" throughout her teens and early 20s. She performed "structured routines", she says, which involved mental counting, usually to eight, and tapping on objects such as light switches and the knobs on the oven. "You make bargains with yourself – if I don't do this, something bad is going to happen to someone I love – which I think is quite a common thing."



Middleton with Lenora Cichlow (left) in White Bear, a 2013 episode of Black Mirror. Photograph: Channel 4

When Middleton made the Radio 4 series, she says, she was overwhelmed by the messages she got "because you always think that you're the only person to have specific elements of OCD". Finding that emetophobia was common was comforting, because it's something she still struggles with. She heard about people who didn't get pregnant because of their fear, and although she didn't suffer with morning sickness – "I got lucky" – it was

something she was nervous of. Hearing other experiences “were a total revelation. Maybe if we just talked about them, they’d be a bit more manageable.”

Middleton is at a point in her career where she feels more comfortable talking about the condition. “I don’t want people to feel that I’m a liability, or that anyone with OCD is a liability, because you can live alongside it and it’s fine,” she says. For her, it tends to be focused around her home life, not work, and she wouldn’t mention it to a director “unless there’s something specifically that I’m concerned about. I don’t want them to go in with an idea that it’s going to affect anything, because it never has.”

There have been periods in her life where it has been less manageable, usually when she was feeling stressed. She would have a “constant running monologue at night, worrying about illness and germs, and not being able to switch that off. And I was getting frustrated with the routines that I was doing – to watch other people just walk out of the house and shut the door was like magic to me.” She has taken medication (antidepressants are often prescribed for OCD), but she found the most helpful treatment was talking therapy. Her friends and family are supportive, she says, and it helps to have people you can talk to. “There are so many good charities, and there’s also a community online too that really works for some people.”

A good day for her, she says, is to be able to leave the house with a minimal routine, just checking doors and mentally counting on her way out. “I’d say there are more good days than bad days, definitely. But I think you always have that internal commentary.” She looks around the restaurant. “If I felt that someone looked like they were sick here, I would be watching what they were touching – which door handles? – and whether I have to wash my hands. You’re monitoring, observing all the time.” It must be tiring. “You get used to it,” she says, “but yes, sometimes you think: ‘I just want to be able to relax and switch off like other people seem to be able to do.’”

Ultimately, though she acknowledges it may not be everyone’s experience, OCD has never stopped her doing anything – from having a baby (with the Swedish film director Måns Mårland) to taking on potentially stressful work. Or “the business of living”, as [Elizabeth Taylor](#) would put it.

“I try to push myself,” says Middleton. “I think, OK, that makes you feel a bit scared, so you should do it. I used to be much more of a procrastinator, and I’ve become better at being more fearless about trying things. Before, I was always going, ‘I can’t do it – I’ll fail and it’ll be awful.’ Now I feel more like, ‘Well, if it fails, it’s not the end of the world.’”

The Motive and the Cue is at the National Theatre, London, until 15 July. It transfers to the Noël Coward Theatre, London, from 9 December. [Tickets are on sale from 30 June.](#)

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‘Inflammation, at its core, is a vital part of the body’s immune response.’
Illustration: Martin O'Neill/The Guardian

[Health & wellbeing](#)

**The truth about inflammation: all you
need to know about 2023’s hottest**

health topic, from causes to cures

Inflammation is the scourge of modern life, judging by all the supplements, workouts and diets that promise to fight it. But what precisely gets inflamed, and why – and is it always a bad thing?



[Joel Snape](#)

Tue 27 Jun 2023 00.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 16.59 EDT

To understand what can go wrong with our bodies, it helps to remember that they haven't evolved much since we were hunting and gathering a few thousand years ago. Our greedy response to sugar, for instance, worked well when we could only get it from wild berries; now that it's combined with salt and fat into foods we can't stop eating, it can be a problem. Or consider our stress response: if the only time your body reroutes resources from the immune system to your fight-or-flight system is during the occasional sabre-toothed tiger attack, that's fine. If every mean tweet, upsetting headline or twinge of worry about the mortgage sends your systems into panic mode, your body never gets a chance to recuperate.

Inflammation, one of the least understood and most debated topics in health, works a bit like this. There are hundreds of cookbooks that promise to deliver an “anti-inflammatory diet”, with supplements, gels, teas, workouts,

saunas and cryotherapy chambers offering the possibility of even more dramatic results. But inflammation, at its core, is a vital part of the body's immune response – not something to try to eliminate. It is a complex biological process that occurs when the body detects harmful stimuli and its purpose is to protect you and kickstart healing. Sometimes this process gets out of control, leading to chronic inflammation that damages rather than heals. The tricky part? Our understanding of this process is evolving: there is a chance that, if you tweak your knee on a five-a-side pitch, you will still be given medical advice that was flipped on its head a decade ago.

So how much do we really know about inflammation – and when should you let it work its magic?

What is inflammation for?



Can I kick it? ... inflammation is a vital part of the body's immune response. Photograph: Adam Burn/Getty Images/fStop

Inflammation is the immune system's response to any traumatic event in the body tissues – from a demanding workout to a scraped knee to a bout of flu. Your immune system releases white blood cells to protect the area, and you will probably experience some redness, warmth and swelling in the affected

spot – occasionally with soreness and pain where the process stimulates nerves. When you are injured, this happens in the affected spot. When you have flu, swelling and pain occur in the respiratory system, but might also contribute to the muscle and joint pain or headaches you experience.

Nearly every disease is associated with some disorder of inflammation, and it's considered a key part of ageing

Tim Spector

“This is acute inflammation – it's part of our defence system, and we all have it, happening in varying degrees and duration depending on what has caused it in the first place,” says Tim Spector, professor of genetic epidemiology at King's College London. “It's only a problem when it goes wrong, usually by overreacting in some way.” Crucially, though, acute inflammation is usually what you want to happen, and trying to prevent it might cause even more problems. We'll come back to this.

What is going wrong?

Chronic inflammation is more of a worry. This happens when the body continues to send white blood cells on the attack in the absence of any threat. This disrupts normal bodily functions and can result in healthy tissues and organs being attacked. Autoimmune disease can bring it about, and so can foreign agents entering the body: it could be a serious problem, even if it's not immediately evident.

“I think we are realising that chronic inflammation is part of many diseases we didn't think it was previously involved in,” says Spector. “Nearly every disease is associated with some disorder of inflammation and it's now considered a key part of ageing. So chronic inflammation really is an issue and something we should be trying to reduce.”

It tends to be less obvious than acute inflammation – it often causes fatigue, but any pain will be less localised. Crucially, the causes still aren't fully understood.

The most immediately dangerous and obvious autoimmune disorders occur when the immune system mistakenly targets and attacks the body's cells, thinking that they are foreign invaders; or when a defect occurs in the systems that usually mediate acute inflammation. But these are breakdowns in the body's communications systems, and deal with problems that don't actually exist – like an overzealous guard dog barking at shadows. Chronic inflammation can also be a result of the body's failure to deal with genuine problems – ranging from infectious organisms to industrial chemicals – and this is where we have to consider whether 21st-century living is promoting levels of chronic inflammation that didn't exist before.

A modern problem



Bad news for night owls ... disruption of circadian rhythms can increase inflammatory markers. Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

“Our modern environments have been markedly transformed, from the food we eat to the air we breathe, to how we move and relate to others,” says Dr Shilpa Ravella, assistant professor of medicine at Columbia University Medical Centre. “Our immune systems are constantly triggered in this new environment, leading to chronic and often low-level inflammation that is linked to various kinds of disease.”

Many inflammatory issues start in the gut, where a huge amount of the trillions of bacteria, viruses, fungi and other organisms that make up every human's microbiome live. Scientists are still unravelling the complexities of the relationship between us and these microbes – but it's well accepted that one of the key interactions between them and our immune cells involves “training” our bodies to distinguish harmless food and germs from their more toxic counterparts. Keeping the bad stuff out without sending our immune systems into overdrive is a fine balance, but one where our foraging-friendly gut errs on the side of tolerance – offering a muted inflammatory response compared with other areas of the body. “Sometimes, this response can go awry, with genes and the environment colluding to disrupt the balance, creating food allergies, coeliac disease, inflammatory bowel disease or other problems,” explains Ravella.

What causes this disruption? For most people, ultra-processed foods (UPFs) are likely to be a factor. [Defined by researchers](#) as “snacks, drinks, ready meals and other products created mostly or entirely from substances extracted from foods or derived from food constituents with little if any intact food” and often highly convenient and palatable, these form a substantial proportion of the typical western diet. A [review published this year](#) concluded that “evidence on the association between UPF consumption and inflammation is still limited”, but there is certainly evidence – [in mice, at least](#) – that artificial sweeteners and additives can alter the makeup of microorganisms found in the gut, making it a more inflammatory environment.

While they might alleviate pain, it appears that both ice and complete rest may delay healing, instead of helping

Other factors may conspire to leave us chronically inflamed. As explained above, life is full of long-term stressors that [have been linked to](#) increases in inflammatory markers. Sleep loss and the [disruption of circadian rhythms](#) can be a factor: bad news if you are staring at a screen well after sunset. There are less easily avoidable environmental factors to worry about too: [recent studies](#), for instance, suggest an association with long-term exposure to air pollution.

If it's not broken ...

So how do you deal with all this? First, do not try to prevent inflammation when it's actually doing you good. If you are injured in a sporting context, for instance, you might find a well-wisher suggesting you use the popular Rice protocol (Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation). But while it might alleviate pain, according to [a 2015 blogpost](#) by Dr Gabe Mirkin – the originator of the acronym – “it appears that both ice and complete rest may delay healing, instead of helping. Applying ice to injured tissue causes blood vessels near the injury to constrict and shut off the blood flow that brings in the healing cells of inflammation ... anything that reduces inflammation also delays healing.” Rest doesn't prevent inflammation – but a bit of movement can get blood to the affected areas, meaning that doing some very low-intensity exercise after an injury can help the healing process.

Hampering your own body's attempts to fix itself also applies to other forms of anti-inflammatory pain relief, including ibuprofen, one of the nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs. A [study presented last year](#) suggests that taking anti-inflammatories for conditions such as osteoarthritis might worsen inflammation in the knee joint over time, with regular NSAID users showing worse cartilage quality than a control group. In [another study](#) (admittedly, conducted on ultramarathoners), ibuprofen use was related to elevated indicators of inflammation. More research is needed, and the occasional ibuprofen tablet is unlikely to do lasting damage – but it is worth keeping an eye on.

Modern solutions



Eat a mixture of foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon. Photograph: Catherine Falls Commercial/Getty Images

Of course, this still leaves you trying to limit chronic inflammation. There are a number of ways to do this, but one of the most effective is to start at the gut. “Reduce processed and refined foods while also limiting added sugars and sugary beverages,” says Dr Sunni Patel, a wellness coach with more than 15 years of clinical experience. “Focus on consuming whole, minimally processed foods that are rich in nutrients and have anti-inflammatory properties. Include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins such as fish, poultry, beans, legumes and healthy fats. What you cook with also makes a difference – emphasise herbs and spices with anti-inflammatory properties, such as turmeric, ginger and garlic.”

There is also [some evidence](#) that the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA have anti-inflammatory effects – so try to eat a mixture of foods that are high in those, including fatty fish such as salmon or mackerel, flaxseeds, chia seeds and walnuts. Avoiding excess alcohol is also important – among other things, [booze disrupts your gut bacteria](#).

What about not eating at all for periods of time? Part of the rationale for intermittent fasting is that it mimics the sporadic availability of food that would have been the norm for much of human history, and [some research](#)

suggests that it can help to limit inflammation. “It goes back to this idea that if you give your body the time it needs to repair itself, it will help autophagy – or the destruction of damaged and unnecessary cells,” says Spector. Early research is promising, but more studies are needed.

What else? “There is some evidence that exercise can reduce inflammation and responses to stress,” says Spector. “Partly because it can help to prevent obesity, which causes inflammation in itself, and partly because it comes with its own benefits.”



Forest bathing ... take your walks where there is greenery. Photograph: Maskot/Getty Images

Exercise doesn't have to be too strenuous – a 2017 study conducted by the University of California San Diego School of Medicine found that even one 20-minute session of moderate exercise can stimulate the immune system, producing an anti-inflammatory response – but [older research](#) suggests that resistance training also helps, implying that the best bet is a mixture of both. If you can, take your walks where there is greenery. “You can change your relationship to the microbes living on, in and around you by increasing your contact with the natural world,” says Ravella. “Forest bathing – essentially, taking a walk in the woods and being mindful of what is around you – can

help us de-stress, but also exposes us to bacteria, viruses and fungi that can boost our own.”

De-stressing in other ways is helpful, too – and so is sleep. “If you can get your circadian rhythms in order by going to bed at a regular time, that allows repair to occur and makes blood sugar spikes less likely,” says Spector. “It all helps.”

If all this seems a lot to remember, the best advice is to do what a hunter-gatherer would do: go on long walks, occasionally indulge in some strenuous physical exertion and try not to worry too much. Oh, and don’t eat anything that you don’t recognise as food. We aren’t *that* evolved, after all.

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2023.06.27 - Opinion

- Look at the effects of the Tories' corrupt voter ID rules – and then tell me Britain is still a democracy
- Ukraine's biggest enemy is the western belief that it cannot beat Putin. Now is the time to rethink that
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‘These voter ID rules will create far worse turmoil at the general election.’
Photograph: Geoffrey Swaine/Shutterstock

[OpinionPolitics](#)

**Look at the effects of the Tories’ corrupt
voter ID rules – and then tell me Britain
is still a democracy**

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Labour has other priorities for now, but once in power it should focus on undoing the damage of these constitutional assaults

Tue 27 Jun 2023 01.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 11.21 EDT

After the misrule of Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, and their cronies cashing in on Covid, [only 6%](#) of people now say they have full trust in our political system, which is alarming. Given the widespread cynicism about Westminster, it's unsurprising that people may be barely shocked when those in power start dismantling democracy. But serial constitutional assaults by the current regime are growing more visible and egregious. Today, electoral administrators warn that the voting system may collapse under Tory changes.

The Electoral Commission has reported that the government's introduction of voter ID resulted in [14,000 people being turned away](#) from polling stations at the local elections. It found it likely that people with disabilities and people who were unemployed or from ethnic minorities were more likely to be refused a vote for lack of a driving licence, passport or official ID from their local council. The true number of those not voting due to ID requirements could have been at least 400,000, suggested the commission, with 4% of non-voters saying the new rules had put them off. The near-40%

of polling stations with [“greeters”](#), who told voters they needed ID, did not record how many voters they deterred.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, speaking at the hard-right national conservative jamboree last month, [made a statement](#) that suggested the new voter ID rules were an attempt to gerrymander. He said that the old system worked “perfectly well”, and admitted somewhat ironically that “the people who didn’t have ID were elderly and they, by and large, voted Conservative, so we made it hard for our own voters”. Indeed, the old system worked so well that there were [no proven cases](#) of “personation” last year.

The true intention behind these rules was always shamelessly obvious: why else was the over-60s Oyster card acceptable ID, but not the 18+ card? When the Lords voted to expand eligible ID to include bank statements, bills, library cards, student ID and others, the government struck that out. This was deliberate voter suppression, the Tories as ever copying their US Republican cousins. It began when David Cameron banned universities and colleges from automatically registering students, so if they were away from home in term time, they could still vote. The only reason the government bars electronic voting is because it fears it would encourage young people, though the Tories use electronic votes for their own internal membership elections – the crucial ones that in recent years have selected prime ministers over our heads.

Labour’s deputy leader, Angela Rayner, responded to the Electoral Commission’s findings by arguing that the rules were having a “chilling effect on democracy”. In power, [Labour](#) could instantly restore the Lords’ proposal for almost any ID to be acceptable. At the same time, it could bring in automatic registration of all voters so none are excluded, such as private renters. Wales is already planning a pilot scheme to do this.

These voter ID rules will create far worse turmoil at the general election. With many more people voting, many more will be turned away. [A report](#) from the Association of Electoral Administrators warns of potential chaos. Angry queues will be just another sign of how this government is stripping away the basics of democracy.

According to Greg Stride of the Local Government Information Unit, voter ID requirements have made it even harder to recruit staff for polling stations. Paid just the minimum wage, many are now reluctant to do ID checks, he said. In the local elections, administrators borrowed staff from nearby councils that were not holding elections. There will probably be no staff to borrow in a general election, so polling stations could be amalgamated, making them harder to reach. Government changes will put unbearable pressure on the general election. Stride says that if voter ID requirements lead to many more postal votes, he fears that the Royal Mail may not be able to deliver votes on time.

Labour is considering lowering the voting age to 16, to urge younger people to vote. It should go further, and get schools to register them and teachers to take them to polling stations. If people vote once, it becomes a lifetime habit. But most importantly, it would tip public spending back towards young people. Imagine if candidates canvassed sixth-form voters as eagerly as they did care home residents. As voters over the age of 70 are [three times more likely](#) to vote Tory than those aged between 18 and 24, the Tories are already raging against Labour's proposals and damning any Labour plans as gerrymandering, with the Daily Mail, as ever, [misrepresenting](#) them. Opponents may struggle to prove that 16- and 17-year-olds are less responsible than the voters who gave us Brexit and Boris Johnson.

"Take back control" was not meant to give absolute control to ministers' whims. Who votes and by what system may now barely matter. The government's "[Brexit freedoms](#)" bill has made it easier to amend or repeal EU laws while sidelining MPs' ability to amend or reject these changes. The Lords has been honourably resisting the bill, but it can be overturned by the Commons. Even so, this doesn't justify the shameful state of nearly 800 unelected peers in an upper house packed with too many donors and chums to list. Labour has promised a democratic chamber: that will take time. But on day one, it could start by barring bishops and hereditaries, and forcing each party to cut their numbers with mass evictions.

Proportional representation will be demanded again by Labour members at the party conference, backed by all main unions (bar the GMB). If anyone thinks this a matter for anoraks, [YouGov](#) finds that 45% of people are in

favour of proportional representation, as opposed to 28% who prefer first past the post. A [report from the thinktank Compass](#) shows how Britain's extreme levels of poverty and inequality partly result from an electoral system that ignores all but a handful of swing voters in marginals: a warped voting system warps all political priorities.

In power, Labour could restore trust in democracy and reconnect voters to government. It could be done immediately, with no referendums, just as the Tories [changed](#) a fair voting system for [mayors](#) and police and crime commissioners to first past the post (they found the alternative vote disadvantaged them, as the Tories are rarely anyone's second choice). Be fearless, just do it in that first flush when either a stonking win or agreement with the Liberal Democrats sweeps all before it. Remember how, the day after an election, the old regime is banished, its banshee press howling in the wilderness.

For now, quite rightly, Labour's ruthless strategy is never to be diverted. Its rule is to have an absolute omertà on anything except the cost of living, NHS and green prosperity investment for growth and jobs. That's it. The Tories would love a row on voting systems instead. The day after victory, opening the books on a destitute public realm and soaring debt, Labour will face hard yards. But democratic reform costs nothing and yields huge majority support. Once in power, Labour should make it happen fast.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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Rishi Sunak introducing Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelenskiy, appearing by videolink at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in London, 21 June 2023. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionRussia](#)

Ukraine's biggest enemy is the western belief that it cannot beat Putin. Now is the time to rethink that

[Keir Giles](#)



Amid clear signs of the Russian leader's vulnerability, we must think beyond helping Kyiv survive and aim for Zelenskiy to actually win

Tue 27 Jun 2023 03.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 14.14 EDT

The myth of Vladimir Putin's unchallengeable power has been fatally undermined by [the challenge from Yevgeny Prigozhin](#) and his Wagner army. By surviving – for now – Prigozhin has set a dangerous precedent for others in Russia who may wish to test their strength against the Kremlin.

But the weekend's events also showed a complete failure by Russia's military, security and intelligence agencies – in fact, by the state as a whole – to deal with the obvious challenge of an armed group apparently heading for Moscow. The evident confusion in Moscow and inability to respond to Prigozhin's challenge also proves Russia is not invincible in its conflict with [Ukraine](#). That critical weakness can only be encouraging for Ukraine in its efforts to beat back the Russian invaders. Russia, it seems, may be strong on the frontline, but it is systemically fragile and the Kremlin can be frightened into paralysis.

That has obvious implications for how Russia's war on Ukraine might be brought to an end. This week the Chatham House foreign affairs thinktank has released [a major report](#) warning of how *not* to end the war. It was written long before the Prigozhin affair came to a head, but the weekend's events just confirm its key points that instead of proposals such as a ceasefire, territorial concessions or other outcomes that reward Russia, Ukraine has to be backed not just to survive but to inflict a clear and unambiguous defeat on Russia. The authors unanimously urge greater support for Ukraine – as rapidly as possible – to speed Russian defeat.

And, critically, the demonstration courtesy of Prigozhin that [Russia](#) is vulnerable and that its weakness can be exploited removes one of the biggest arguments for soft-peddling aid to Ukraine and planning for “negotiated settlement” rather than outright victory for Kyiv. It should put an end to suggestions that Russia cannot, and indeed should not, be defeated.

Time and again throughout the conflict we have heard from western politicians that “[we must not humiliate Russia](#)” by inflicting the kind of defeat that its unprovoked aggression would deserve, because that would somehow make the situation worse not better.

This argument has achieved widespread support in public debate. On the anniversary of the full-scale invasion the archbishop of Canterbury [wrote an article](#) calling for peace with justice and explaining that Russia must never be allowed to attack again, as Germany was after 1918. But the narrative that Russia must not be “humiliated” has permeated western discussion so deeply that the same newspaper entirely [misinterpreted his comments](#) and twisted them into another warning against a repeat of the [Treaty of Versailles](#).

The argument is that the treaty imposed such humiliating terms on Germany that it led to the rise of Hitler a decade later, and then to the second world war – and defeat of Russia would risk the same trajectory. But it's misleading to say that defeat will nurture the seeds of future conflict; those seeds are already fully grown. And in reality, the whole war has already been [a sequence of humiliations](#) for Russia, centring on the dismal performance of its military and intelligence services and its exposure as an unreconstructed, atavistic, primitive and brutalised threat to Europe.

But consistent patterns of Russian behaviour over decades and centuries, combined with the clearly stated aims of the current leadership and the disposition of much of its population, make clear defeat for Russia essential. These patterns make it plain that an inconclusive outcome in Ukraine, if crystallised in the form of a ceasefire agreement, would constitute a victory for Moscow and a validation of its choice to embark on the path of conflict. Any perception of success – which Russia will measure by ground held, not by lives or materiel lost – will leave the Kremlin convinced that its assault on Ukraine was the correct choice.

Will the Wagner mutiny cost Putin power in Russia? – video explainer

Importantly, the presumptions of exceptionalism, entitlement and impunity that drove the assault on Ukraine are prevalent not just among leaders and active supporters of the regime but also among those notionally in opposition, including the sectors of Russian “liberal” society that fully subscribe to the notion that Ukraine has no right to independent existence. It is only a clear and unambiguous check to Russia’s ambition that will start to challenge these attitudes. Ideally, this should include setting conditions where Russians can be made to bear responsibility for war crimes, and for the damage done to Ukraine and its people. This may not be achievable in the short term, but for as long as it is not achieved, Russia will escape the process of truth and reconciliation over past crimes that it successfully avoided at the end of the cold war, laying the cornerstone for today’s war of revenge.

And it will certainly never be achievable if Ukraine is constrained from delivering the essential salutary defeat. Western planning for failure by Ukraine is Kyiv’s worst enemy. It’s a circular argument – if you assume Russia is unbeatable, then you don’t supply Ukraine with the weapons to enable it to be beaten. Some analysts appear to be looking forward to confirmation that Ukraine doesn’t really have a realistic chance of a military victory. But this ignores that success or failure is to a significant degree dependent on western aid and support.

Until now, western backers have provided Ukraine with enough to survive [but not to win](#). So, the Chatham House report concludes, the time is now to lift restrictions on the weapons systems supplied to Ukraine, and what

Ukraine can do with them, allowing Kyiv to achieve the defeat of Russia that is essential for all our safety.

- Keir Giles works with the Russia and Eurasia programme of Chatham House and is the author of Russia's War on Everybody
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Bernard Arnault (third from right) with his wife and children. Photograph: Christophe Archambault/AFP/Getty Images

[OpinionFrance](#)

He's the world's richest man. So why do we hear so little from Bernard Arnault?

[Alexander Hurst](#)



France does not expect much in the way of philanthropy from its low-profile billionaire class. Perhaps it should

Tue 27 Jun 2023 05.00 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 16.36 EDT

If you scroll through the first 10 or so pages of Google results for the charitable giving of the world's [on- and off-again wealthiest man](#), Bernard Arnault, you'll find ... practically nothing.

The most high-profile things that do come up when searching for evidence of the generosity of the founder and CEO of the French luxury goods behemoth LVMH look more like acts of [billionaire one-upmanship](#). LVMH paid for the architecturally stunning [Fondation Louis Vuitton](#) museum, which showcases Arnault's collection of modern art. The rival billionaire owner of the luxury brands group Kering, François Pinault, has his private collection of contemporary art on display in the Bourse de Commerce in Paris's 1st arrondissement. Arnault's [€200m pledge](#) towards the reconstruction of Notre Dame came just after Pinault pledged €100m.

In fact, as far as donations published on the internet go, Arnault's largest charitable donation seems to have been to [his children](#).



The French billionaire François Pinault with some of his art collection, on display at the Couvent des Jacobins. Photograph: Luc Castel/Getty Images

The rest – you’ll find a smattering of giving unrelated to art acquisition here and there – is a mere fraction of Arnault’s \$196bn net worth.

When I reached out to a spokesperson for Arnault, they said he did not disclose his personal giving. But they brought my attention to donations made by LVMH, including €10m to fight forest fires in the Amazon, €20m to French public hospitals and €5m to the Institut Pasteur de Lille during Covid, €2m to the Chinese Red Cross, €5m to the Ukrainian Red Cross, and €1m for flood relief in Italy, as well as in-kind donations by producing hand sanitiser and masks to relieve France’s Covid shortages.

If this is indeed Arnault channelling his own giving *through* his company, then in percentage terms, this roughly €45m is like an average French household (in a country where the [median net wealth](#) is €124,800) giving about €25 to their dearest causes. Or, if you add in the €43m from LVMH [to help](#) the Musée d’Orsay acquire a painting by Gustave Caillebotte this year, then that average family dug deep and gave about €50. Yes, you read that correctly. It’s not missing a zero.

Considered purely as a business, LVMH lists numerous non-profits as “stakeholders”. But its [latest annual report](#), while long on its commitment to environmental and social responsibility, offers few details as to the actual amount of financial support it has provided to them. It includes employee and client donations in the \$57m it says its “maisons” contributed in charitable giving. Or put another way, 0.4% of the \$14.1bn in net profit LVMH made last year.

So, yes, perhaps Arnault is secretly far more generous, and merely abiding by the biblical maxim to not let the left hand know what the right is doing. Or perhaps, as the French business magazine *Challenges* pointed out in 2020, France’s ultra-wealthy citizens – the country is home to one of the two richest men in the world and the [richest woman](#), the l’Oréal heiress Françoise Bettencourt Meyers (around \$89bn) – are just [far less charitable](#) than some of their foreign counterparts (who, to be fair, often use philanthropy as a means to offset their taxes).

They’re also less visible. Of course, Arnault’s vast wealth is no secret in his home country, and he’s no stranger to those in power. But even though the wildly successful LVMH sells some of the most coveted products in the world, it has no corresponding fanboys like the [ones who trail Tesla](#). Indeed, American billionaires often figure more prominently in popular conversation in France – actually, you could extend this to all of Europe – than France’s own.

There are also few headlines extolling mammoth donations to endow university departments or professorships, no high-profile or generous French equivalents of the privately funded [Watson Fellowship](#) or [MacArthur genius grant](#). No ubiquity of donor names on hospital wings, no “Arnault Global Initiative”. (I would be remiss not to mention that the French state is more willing to do these things via tax policy than its counterparts in the English-speaking world have been.)

I can’t help but wonder: why, in France, a society so sensitive to questions of wealth and economic justice, is there so little clamour for Arnault and other French billionaires to be seen to be doing more?



The world's richest woman, Françoise Bettencourt Meyers. Photograph: Mehdi Fedouach/AFP/Getty Images

That the country's super-rich would seek to maintain a low profile is understandable: wealth in France is looked at with greater suspicion than in the US or UK. All the above would be far more likely to elicit responses of "is this democratically legitimate?", or "what influence will they wield over the university as a result?", or "why do they have all this money in the first place? Maybe they shouldn't".

These are all legitimate questions. Perhaps Arnault *shouldn't* have so much money to begin with. Perhaps billionaires shouldn't in effect control [access to outer space](#), or – at least in the case of the US – be able to flood politics with immeasurable amounts of secret money. Extreme inequality threatens the stability and integrity of institutions of democracy. Perhaps, as someone once said, after a rich person reaches \$1bn, we should build them a monument, declare them official winners of capitalism and apply a 100% tax rate to the rest.

But in the world as it is, Arnault's vast private wealth does exist. And even if Arnault and LVMH pay their fair share in taxes (though [recent research](#) from France shows that ultra-wealthy people on average pay less by percentage than the merely wealthy), employ many people, and – and I do mean this –

constitute an enormous economic success for France, it's not enough. Not when one's assets amount to the GDP of a small country. It's not enough. It's also more than just a French problem – it's a global one.

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Let me be clear: billionaires [are not the solution](#) to the climate emergency or biodiversity loss. But the concentration of wealth in their hands [could go a long way](#) in [accelerating the transition](#) to green energy and addressing gaps in climate finance. And private funds have a certain type of freedom to manoeuvre and take risks (such as [funding climate litigation](#)) that governments often lack.

Jeff Bezos, who recently launched his new [\\$500m yacht](#), has for years [faced criticism](#) for not giving more of his wealth away. But at least he was shamed into devoting \$10bn to global environmental efforts. (MacKenzie Scott – who became one of the richest people in the world after divorcing Bezos – has [effectively supplemented](#) the rest of his “should-be” giving for him). Elon Musk, through his erratic use of Twitter to boost far-right trolls, presents his own type of challenge to democratic society. But at the very least, Tesla kickstarted the shift away from the internal combustion engine and towards the electric car and distributed solar panels and battery storage.

And of course Bill Gates was the original problem billionaire, but after years of public haranguing he dedicated himself to things other than his own personal consumption and passing absurd levels of wealth to his children. He and Warren Buffett even coaxed fellow mega-billionaires such as Michael Bloomberg and Larry Ellison into joining their [Giving Pledge](#) to divest at least half of their net worth before or upon their deaths. Some take their social responsibilities even more seriously, such as the Patagonia founder [Yvon Chouinard](#), who placed the clothing company [in a trust](#) with the profits destined to fight climate breakdown.



Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, the co-founders of the Giving Pledge, in 2017. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

When it comes to Arnault, though, sometimes those in France who would naturally be critical seem as if they would rather wish him away than press him to, or perhaps even see him, publicly direct his wealth to philanthropy other than art. While that might be understandable, the end result is unacceptable – not merely for France, but also for Europe and the world more broadly. The climate and biodiversity crises are too urgent and too severe for him to sit atop his hoard of wealth like the dragon [Smaug](#) in Middle Earth's Lonely Mountain, secreted away from the impact it might yet have.

We hear time and again from defenders of the system that has allowed such ludicrous concentration of wealth into so few hands that it is necessary for investment. So where is Arnault's venture fund funnelling cash to [carbon removal](#) using geothermal energy in Iceland, or to next-generation lithium-free [batteries](#), or just simply buying up land [to protect it](#)? Perhaps even strategically located land that chokes off access for mining, logging or drilling projects in old-growth forests and rainforests.

There are some who will howl with fury at that last idea, but the one place where private wealth produced a public good we now take for granted is art collections and their display in museums. That's something Arnault grasps, and so maybe that's a natural place for him to start. In the same way that he might buy art for display to the public later on, he could buy land to gift back to governments as natural reserves.

And if he needs some external motivation, maybe this will work: Hey François Pinault, are you listening?

- Alexander Hurst is a France-based writer and adjunct lecturer at Sciences Po, the Paris Institute for Political Studies

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Rishi Sunak speaks at an event in the Ikea distribution centre at Dartford in Kent. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[The politics sketch](#)[Rishi Sunak](#)

Shaken by inflation? Be a Brit and show some grit, says Rishi

[John Crace](#)



Life's about survival these days – but the trick, according to the PM, is just to hold our nerve

Mon 26 Jun 2023 15.58 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 21.30 EDT

We just need to hold our nerve. That was Rishi Sunak's message to the country over the weekend. Time to remind us Brits to rediscover our inner stiff upper lip. To shrug off the increased, unaffordable mortgage repayments. To laugh as wage rises fail to keep pace with inflation. To quote Kipling as debt rises to more than 100% of GDP.

Easier for some than for others. If, like Sunak, you don't have a mortgage then maybe you can feel detached about interest rate rises. Perhaps even be secretly pleased that you might be getting a healthier return on your multimillion-pound investments.

Harder still for those who have been told their public sector pay will be determined by wage review bodies. Only to be now told that the government reserves the right to ignore their recommendations. In a Total War on inflation, the War is more Total for some than for others. Only some will be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Still, it turns out that holding your nerve is also proving tricky for some Tory MPs. This time last year, when Boris Johnson – remember him? – was prime minister, the Labour lead over the Tories was just five percentage points. It's now up to roughly 25 percentage points.

And this with the Conservatives having switched to a more competent, user-friendly leader. Someone who could be trusted to get things done. Who understood politics. Phew! A big relief to those Tories looking into the maw of oblivion.

But holding your nerve is now all that the government has left by way of policy. It's the last idea still standing. Other than closing your eyes and hoping for the best. Though, come to think of it, that's really just a variation on holding your nerve. Just not so openly desperate.

Nerve implies courage. When the reality is that you don't have a choice. The debt will come for you one way or another, whether you like it or not. But, hey. Beggars can't be choosers.

You'd have 12 months from the first missed payment to being repossessed. So plenty of time to accumulate lots of cardboard boxes for your new starter home on the streets

We're just talking survival now. All pretence of making a better life for ourselves and our children has gone. It's just how to get through the next few years without ending up on the streets.

Call me forgetful, but I don't remember that being plastered all over the side of a bus in the referendum campaign. Or else I'm just not up to speed with the latest iteration of the Tory dream. Leave this world as you came into it. With nothing whatsoever. Apart from unpaid debt.

Then again, even if there were good news, I'm not sure that [Jeremy Hunt](#) is the best person to impart it. Because, urbane and polite as he often is, there hasn't been a chancellor who knew less about running the economy for decades. Even George Osborne knew more. Someone sign him up for an A-level evening course. Just for the veneer of self-worth.

What's more, his sense of panic when asked to explain something is desperate. The fear in his eyes could set off a run on the pound at any time. So when he says he has a solution, the rest of us know it's time to leave the country.

Jezza was in the Commons to give a statement on the mortgage charter he had fixed up with some lenders last Friday. Interest rates were now at 5%. He didn't seem to really know if that was a good or bad thing. Or if they were high or low.

Certainly no one appeared to have told him they are predicted to go up to 6% by this September. This getting inflation done priority is working a treat.

"I understand people's anxiety and concern," he said, tentatively. He doesn't really. This is a man who [once apparently forgot to declare seven buy-to-let flats](#). Easily done.

But here was the thing. Under his new voluntary charter – people could take it or leave it – borrowers could switch to interest-only mortgages for six months or extend the amount of time they had to repay the loan.

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Great. In hock well into retirement. Not sure how the pension is going to pay off the mortgage but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it. But the best news came last. You'd have 12 months from the first missed payment to being repossessed. So plenty of time to accumulate lots of cardboard boxes for your new starter home on the streets.

Labour's Rachel Reeves was in imperious form by way of reply. The shadow chancellor knows that Hunt knows that she knows she is three times as economically sharp as him.

How come the new charter wasn't mandatory? And why were mortgage payments £2,000 more than in France and £1,000 more than in Ireland and Belgium? How come the so-called global factors didn't extend to some of our closest European neighbours? Could it be that the problem lies with a Tory government that has been in power for 13 years?

"Um." Hunt didn't really have an answer. There was no real plan. Neither was there reassurance. Just more years of debt in a home that belonged mainly to the bank. Still. We had been told to hold our nerve. So that was something.

Next up, we had James Cleverly making a statement on the attempted coup in Russia over the weekend. Though because he, David Lammy and all other MPs from both sides of the house knew no more than had appeared in most newspaper analyses, everyone basically agreed on everything. Prighozin was bad. Putin was bad. It would be inappropriate to speculate. And we were right to continue to offer our unequivocal support to Ukraine.

It was all very cosy. Self-congratulatory even. Though the self-importance was briefly interrupted by Liz Truss, who was making just her second appearance in the Commons since her disastrous 49 days as prime minister.

Not that she shows any sign of the trauma and shame of her downfall. Either she's had plenty of therapy or she remains entirely dissociated. The latter, I'd guess.

But Liz has clearly decided that Ukraine is her legacy and that this is her meal ticket to further well-paid public speaking events. Though many of us

would pay for her not to speak.

She was adamant that Ukraine should instantly be made a member of Nato. Even if that provoked a war between Russia and the west. Cleverly wasn't convinced. He may be dim but he isn't that dim. Nato was something for later. In the meantime, we should all just hold our nerve. It must be contagious.

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CNN airs audio of Donald Trump discussing military secrets at golf club – video

[Donald Trump](#)

Trump heard on CNN tape discussing military secrets at golf club

Ex-president is heard discussing a Pentagon paper detailing plans to attack Iran with people who did not have security clearances

Guardian staff and agencies

Mon 26 Jun 2023 22.15 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 10.02 EDT

An audio clip has emerged of [Donald Trump](#) discussing secret documents that he had not declassified at his Bedminster, New Jersey, golf club in July 2021, providing new evidence that the former president knew of proper declassification procedures.

The [recording](#), obtained by CNN, includes new details from a conversation that is a critical piece of evidence in special counsel Jack Smith's indictment of Trump over the mishandling of classified information. It includes a moment when Trump seems to indicate he was holding a secret Pentagon document with plans to attack Iran.

The episode is one of two referenced in the indictment where prosecutors allege that Trump showed classified information to others who did not have security clearances, [CNN](#) reported.

In the conversation, Trump is talking with people helping his former chief of staff Mark Meadows write a book. His aide, Margo Martin, regularly taped conversations with authors to ensure they accurately recounted his remarks.

According to the recording aired on CNN, Trump refers to the document and its classified status.

“These are the papers,” Trump says in the audio recording, while he’s discussing the Pentagon attack plans, a quote that was not included in the indictment.

“This was done by the military and given to me,” Trump continues, before noting that the document remained classified. “See as president I could have declassified it,” he says. “Now I can’t, you know, but this is still a secret.”

Trump and his aides also joked about Hillary Clinton’s emails.

“Hillary would print that out all the time, you know. Her private emails,” Trump’s staffer said.

“No, she’d send it to Anthony Weiner,” Trump responded, referring to the former Democratic congressman, prompting laughter in the room.

The Trump audio:

"See as president I could have declassified it. Now I can't, you know, but this is still a secret."

"Now we have a problem," a staffer responds.
pic.twitter.com/ftNqOTnfZn

— Kaitlan Collins (@kaitlancollins) [June 27, 2023](#)

The audio recording obtained by CNN included more lines from the conversation:

Trump: “It’s so cool. I mean, it’s so, look, her and I, and you probably almost didn’t believe me, but now you believe me.”

Writer: “No, I believed you.”

Trump: “It’s incredible, right?”

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Writer: “No, they never met a war they didn’t want.”

Trump: “Hey, bring some, uh, bring some Cokes in please.”

The July 2021 meeting that was recorded came shortly after Trump was incensed about news reports that Mark Milley, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, had urged him not to attack Iran in the final weeks of his presidency.

Trump believed that the document outlining the report to attack Iran would undercut Milley’s reported assertions, though the report was actually written earlier in the Trump administration when Joseph Dunford was chairman of the joint chiefs, a person familiar with the document said.

Trump pleaded not guilty earlier this month to 37 counts related to the alleged mishandling of classified documents kept at his [Mar-a-Lago](#) resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

Hugo Lowell contributed reporting

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Jeffrey Epstein had been a JPMorgan client from 1998 through 2013, when the bank terminated his accounts. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

[Jeffrey Epstein](#)

JPMorgan to pay Jeffrey Epstein victims \$290m in lawsuit settlement

District judge Jed Rakoff approved the ‘very large’ amount in addition to a \$75m payout agreement with Deutsche Bank

Reuters

Mon 26 Jun 2023 20.51 EDTLast modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 11.56 EDT

A US judge on Monday granted preliminary approval to JPMorgan Chase’s \$290m settlement with women who said [Jeffrey Epstein](#) abused them and that the largest US bank ignored the late financier’s sex trafficking.

The approval was issued by US district judge Jed Rakoff at a hearing in Manhattan federal court.

“This is a really fine settlement,” Rakoff said.

He said the accord and a similar \$75m agreement with [Deutsche Bank](#) he approved earlier this month were “very large settlements” that would compensate Epstein’s victims, though not make up for abuses they suffered.

Epstein had been a JPMorgan client from 1998 through 2013, when the bank terminated his accounts.

Victims led by a former ballet dancer known as Jane Doe 1 said JPMorgan missed red flags of Epstein’s abuses and stayed in touch with him long after his official departure.

Lawyers for the victims said last week that the proposed all-cash settlement was “fair, adequate, reasonable” given the risks of further litigation and JPMorgan’s denying involvement in Epstein’s sex trafficking.

JPMorgan in a statement this month said any association it had with Epstein “was a mistake and we regret it”.

Epstein remained a JPMorgan client for five years after he pleaded guilty in 2008 to a Florida prostitution charge and registered as a sex offender.

At Monday’s hearing, Rakoff asked Jane Doe 1’s lawyer, David Boies, why there was no minimum distribution for each victim, noting that the Deutsche Bank settlement, which Boies also negotiated, guaranteed each at least \$75,000.

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Boies said many victims in the Deutsche Bank case were from Russia or eastern Europe and difficult to contact, making the guaranteed minimum an incentive to come forward. He said that was not needed in the JPMorgan case.

Rakoff appointed Simone Lechuk, a lawyer who specializes in administering settlements, to consider individual claims and determine payouts in the JPMorgan and Deutsche Bank cases.

JPMorgan is also facing a lawsuit over Epstein by the US Virgin Islands, where the financier owned two neighboring islands. That case is currently scheduled to go on trial on 23 October.

Epstein died at age 66 in a Manhattan jail cell while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges. New York City's medical examiner called the death a suicide.

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On a quest to recreate the ‘perfect cooking-show moment’: Mmabatho Molefe at Emazulwini, her restaurant in Cape Town, South Africa. Photograph: Paris Brummer

[Global development](#)

The politics of street food: the South African chef championing Zulu cuisine

For Mmabatho Molefe, whose Cape Town restaurant reinvents ‘peasant dishes’, cooking is a way to fight prejudice

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[Lizzy Davies](#)

Tue 27 Jun 2023 05.30 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 06.23 EDT

When Mmabatho Molefe was growing up in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal, Friday was a special day, when her parents would give her pocket money to buy food rather than take a packed lunch to school. On a good day, she would spend it all on a *vetkoek* – traditional doughnut-like fried bread stuffed, in her case, with chicken.

“For me, it just represents a really good Friday afternoon,” says the 28-year-old chef, chuckling. For 12 days from 27 June, her version of that beloved South African street food is set to wow British diners as Molefe becomes the latest guest chef in the “open kitchen” of the London restaurant [Carousel](#).

One of the reasons why we champion offal and ‘lesser’ cuts of meat is not only because of sustainability but also prejudice

Part of a [new generation of African chefs](#) celebrating the continent’s cuisine – people, in her words, “who are just unapologetically representing themselves” – Molefe is keen to bring the food she grew up eating at her mother’s table to the rest of the world.

Diners at Carousel, where more than 300 guest chefs have taken up residencies since 2014, will be served [a seven-course romp](#) through the Zulu diet, taking in dishes such as sweetcorn custard with chickpea shoots and mealie bread, seared scallops with corned beef tongue and spicy tomato broth, and ending in a fermented maize porridge with lemon verbena ice-cream.

“The idea behind the menu itself was to represent memories of my childhood, and that’s just based on dishes that my mom would prepare for me or instances in my childhood that revolved around food – because my sister says I would only remember things if there was food involved,” says Molefe.

To varying extents, the dishes have been reimagined for a wider audience. One is inspired by a sumptuous chicken-neck stew she remembers her mother making but, as she did not want to “put an entire chicken neck on a plate”, it has been reworked as a dainty tartlet, the gelatinous neck bones ground into a “light, meaty mousse”.



Plating up ... Molefe at work. Photograph: Paris Brummer

The chef’s easy, self-deprecating humour belies the serious status she has built up in just a few years on the international food scene, last year earning

herself a place on the [World's 50 Next](#) list of the most dynamic players on the global food scene.

Her Cape Town restaurant [Emazulwini](#) only opened in 2020 – and had to close three weeks later owing to Covid restrictions. But in that time she has made a name for herself as a talented, playful champion of meat cuts, indigenous staples and so-called “peasant dishes” that have long faced prejudice.

Molefe dropped out of the politics, philosophy and law course she started at university (“I think I spent more time cooking than studying,” she admits). But there is a fire to her cooking that is indisputably political. By bringing the food of rural South [Africa](#) to the fine dining tables of Cape Town – and London – she is “fight[ing] prejudices and misconceptions”, she says.

“One of the reasons why we champion cuts such as offal and ‘lesser’ cuts of meat is not only because of sustainability, but also just [because of] prejudice: people just saying, ‘No, this isn’t a good cut of meat, so we’re going to discard it or use it for dog food.’ It’s just us saying: ‘This is an unappreciated cut: treat it well and watch it flourish.’ And that’s how I feel in terms of socioeconomic issues, racial issues and other political issues.”

It is not just on the plate that Molefe’s politics come through. A “lifetime goal” is to create a recreational centre for homeless people in Cape Town, and to help them retrain for work in the hospitality industry.

Moreover, she recognises that, in the culinary industry of South Africa, still largely “dominated by white males”, the decision to hire an all-black and, for a time, all-female staff to run Emazulwini has been vital. As the restaurant has expanded, she has hired some men, she adds – but only those who “have learned how to respect women”.

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The dining space at Emazulwini in Cape Town. Photograph: Paris Brummer

Molefe started cooking – after a fashion – at a young age, playing a game in her back yard inspired by a love of the [BBC show Ready Steady Cook](#). “But obviously my parents were like: you’re not going to waste food,” she says. “So we used to ‘cook’ with banana leaves and mud cakes and it just grew as an interest.”

By the age of 10 she was allowed to make one dish: flapjacks, which she “continuously made for years until I found the perfect recipe”. Her mother remembers her bowing over the plate as she had seen the chefs doing on TV. In her head, she says, she is still on a quest to recreate “the perfect cooking-show moment”.

For now, she is excited about bringing her gastronomic vision to London, a city where she knows she will have little trouble sourcing good African ingredients. If there is one dish on her Carousel menu that embodies her desire to revalidate the food of her youth, it is the *ipapa neklabishi*: braised beef heart, maize and cabbage with sweetbread.

In South Africa, cabbage is considered “a low-income household staple”, she says. “So to be able to fully represent it and cook it internationally and have people say, ‘OK, I’d be willing to pay this much to try it,’ when normally it wouldn’t be seen as something worthy. That says, ‘this is me, this is who I am, and this is where I come from.’”

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Japan took 40 years to approve oral contraceptives, in 1999, but only six months to approve the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra. Photograph: Philippe Huguen/AFP/Getty Images

[Japan](#)

Japan approves trial sales of over-the-counter emergency contraceptives

The move is a major policy shift in country's male-dominated parliament and brings Japan into line with more than 90 other countries

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Tue 27 Jun 2023 01.20 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Jun 2023 12.00 EDT

[Japan](#) is to permit the sale of emergency contraceptives without prescription on a trial basis, weeks after it approved the abortion pill.

The move, reported by media on Tuesday, will bring [Japan](#) into line with dozens of other countries where the morning-after pill is already available over the counter.

Current rules require women, including those who have been sexually assaulted, to attend a clinic or hospital for an emergency contraceptive prescription.

The drugs are said to be most effective if they are taken within 72 hours after unprotected sex.

A health ministry panel approved the sale through March next year at chemists staffed by qualified pharmacists who are able to coordinate with nearby obstetrics and gynaecology clinics, according to the Kyodo news agency.

The decision to allow over-the-counter sales marks a major policy shift, and comes soon after its [approved the abortion pill](#) in April. Previously, only surgical abortions were available, in the first nine weeks of pregnancy.

Campaigners say the long wait for Japan to approve the abortion pill, which had long been available in more than 70 other countries, reflects the low priority the country's male-dominated parliament and medical community give to [women's sexual health](#).

Japan took 40 years to approve oral contraceptives, in 1999, but only six months to approve the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra.

Emergency contraceptives, which have an efficacy rate of about 80%, are available without a prescription in about 90 other countries, according to the ministry.

The trial sale enjoys strong public support. When a health ministry panel invited the public to submit comments last year, more than 90% of the 46,312 responses were in favour of pharmacy sales, the public broadcaster NHK said.

In 2017, the panel stopped short of approving over-the-counter sales amid fears that the drugs' easy availability could encourage "irresponsible" behaviour.

But medical professionals have called for the drugs to be made more accessible, saying they would increase options for rape survivors and potentially reduce the number of expensive surgical [abortions](#).

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The 1969 uprising at the Stonewall Inn was sparked by police harassment and abuse of gay and trans people. Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

[Kamala Harris](#)

Kamala Harris warns of threats to LGBTQ+ rights during visit to Stonewall

‘We won’t be deterred,’ says vice-president, urging Americans to fight for LGBTQ+ equality amid rightwing attacks

[Joanna Walters](#) in New York

[@Joannawalters13](#)

Mon 26 Jun 2023 20.19 EDTLast modified on Mon 26 Jun 2023 22.20 EDT

Kamala Harris urged Americans to continue to battle for equality in the face of fresh waves of anti-LGBTQ+ action and rhetoric by conservatives, as she

made a surprise visit to the historic Stonewall Inn in New York City on Monday.

The US vice-president celebrated the bar's place in gay rights history while warning that many queer Americans are living "in fear" as rightwing legislatures pass draconian anti-LGBTQ+ laws and Republican [leaders step up](#) hostile rhetoric and conspiracy theories, particularly aimed at transgender and non-binary people.

Harris dropped in at Stonewall to mark Pride month and [54 years since](#) the bar was the epicenter of riots sparked by patrons resisting police harassment and extortion that transformed into demonstrations and marches, ushering in the modern LGBTQ+ protest and celebration movement.

The fight for equal rights in the US was not over, Harris said, noting that the bar in the Greenwich Village neighborhood represented an inflection point in history – "a moment that is about equality and a movement that is about freedom", while adding: "No one should be made to fight."

Pride flags outside the Stonewall, probably the most famous gay bar in the world, have been ripped down and damaged by vandals [three times](#) so far this month.

"There are over 600 bills that are being proposed, anti-LGBTQ bills," Harris said, calling [such moves](#) a "failed policy approach" and adding: "People are afraid to be themselves – these are fundamental issues that point to the need for us to all be vigilant, to stand together."

Trans and lesbian patrons are believed to have started [the initial riot](#) at Stonewall in June 1969 during an all-too-common police raid at the bar, for which the New York [police department apologized](#) in 2019 during events [to mark](#) the 50th [anniversary](#) of that burst of resistance.

Harris noted that she "was honored to perform some of the first [same-sex marriages](#) in our country back in 2004" and said of the latest homophobic push from the right: "We are not going to be overwhelmed, we're not going to be silenced, we're not going to be deterred, we are not going to tire ...

We're going to roll up our sleeves. That, to me, [is] what Stonewall means – strength in numbers.”

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The Stonewall Inn became a national historic landmark in 2000 and, in 2016, [it became](#) a US national monument under then president Barack Obama.

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