San Antonio is unique for having five World Heritage gems, all within a ten minute drive from the city center. The San Antonio Missions. “The San Antonio Missions are also an example of the interweaving of Spanish and Coahuiltecan cultures, illustrated by a variety of features, including the decorative elements of churches, which combine Catholic symbols with indigenous designs inspired by nature,” the UNESCO World Heritage web site states. “The complexes were built in the early eighteenth century and as a group they illustrate the Spanish Crown’s efforts to colonize, evangelize and defend the northern frontier of New Spain. In addition to evangelizing the area’s indigenous population into converts loyal to the Catholic Church, the missions also included all the components required to establish self-sustaining, socio-economic communities loyal to the Spanish Crown…the widespread sharing of knowledge and skills among their inhabitants, and the early adoption of a common language and religion resulted in a people and culture with an identity neither wholly indigenous nor wholly Spanish that has proven exceptionally persistent and pervasive.” While they each of the missions are steeped in history, the Alamo, has long been an icon for San Antonio. On May 10, 2019 the Texas Historical Commission (THC) designated a large portion of the Alamo Complex and Plaza, a “Historic Texas Cemetery.” Yet, the Texas General Land Office (GLO) is refusing to acknowledge that cemetery designation. In large part, because the Alamo is a tourist destination, and lacks rows of headstones. A final vote will take place July 19. In Paris. Texas that is. American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions\* Executive Director, Ramon J. Vasquez has been leading Mission Heritage tours for several years. These aren’t your ordinary cursory tourist views of San Antonio. Rather, The Mission Heritage Tours seek to tell the untold story. The Native narrative. “We’re helping people to understand the reality. To tell the complete and accurate story. Go far beyond the movie images of John Wayne’s “Battle of the Alamo’,” explains Vasquez. According to Vasquez, the Texas government is still viewing San Antonio through horse blinders. Vasquez, last weekend, told a tour group how history is being wiped out. “Our families’ contributions are being minimized and ignored, from the American Revolution to this very moment.” After hundreds of years of professed equality, there is still widespread discrimination and disrespect toward the Native peoples. The GLO is refuting that the Alamo is a cemetery precisely because it is a tourist site. And, there are no headstones. Historic evidence is shelved. Logic, too. “We are talking about burial grounds from the 1700s. The GLO, is discounting people because they are indigenous to Texas, materially less off, or because they couldn’t place a granite monument up that would last 300 years. The GLO is saying our ancestors are not equally deserving protection under the law,” adds Vasquez. “That disregard may be detrimental and threatening on potentially all historic cemeteries and sites.” In fact, his people, the Tap Pilam Coahuitecan Nation have been fighting to protect these burial grounds for more than 30 years. Assuch, the Tap Pilam tribal community has done quite a bit of research. Among their sources are the San Antonio Archdiocese’s historical files that include baptismal, marriage and burial records. Moreover: Eight different institutions, plus City of San Antonio historians and archeologists recognize the Alamo as a cemetery. The Alamo Complex and Alamo Plaza are considered cemeteries under the law. The statutory protections provided by the Texas Legislature and entrusted to the Texas Historical Commission for their administration were intended precisely for sites such as the Alamo Cemetery. The Texas Legislature established a Historic Texas Cemetery designation for recognition, protection and preservation of such sites. The burial grounds were on Jose Juan Sanchez Navarro’s map in 1836. Alamo Plaza was registered in 2005 by the Texas Historical Commission and listed in the Cemeteries of Bexar County. Additional records document unbaptized Indians buried outside the walls of the Alamo. Bodies were found on what was the Southern wall. “Our community leaders and experts are being ignored,” says Vasquez. “It is another assault against people of color, who were the original inhabitants of this land. They want to plow under the very people that built the Alamo.” By 1731, the imposing Mission San Jose had already been built thanks to the labor of hundreds of Native Americans. In 1745, Spanish documents listed at least 600 people buried at the Alamo. 100 years later, hundreds more perished (and were interred) at the Battle of the Alamo and the Siege of Bejar. “Our history is a gift to the city of San Antonio. Yet history is disregarded,” states Vasquez. “We have the names of those buried here. Our families have struggled for generations to preserve the final resting place of the first families of San Antonio. We cannot bury history. It is a family obligation to those that have paved the way. We have to preserve it for future generations. We are fighting for the descendants of the first Spanish settlers…the first Indian families…our Catholic families, and the families of the Defenders of the Alamo…all of whom are buried here. We’ve been defending our constitutional rights since the beginning, and protecting those rights for members of our families that have served and are serving today.”

It’s hard to imagine that a strip of land that extends 70 miles, and has a year-round population of only 28,100 would consider itself a mecca for the arts. But, then again, Door County isn’t your typical sleepy rural community. Rather, it is one of the Midwest’s premier tourism destinations, attracting more than 2 million visitors per year. And, of course, many of those tourists want to enjoy arts and culture. Door County, which is comprised of many townships, islands and inlets north of Green Bay is the “thumb” protruding from the lower east side of Wisconsin along Lake Michigan. Among the cultural institutions here, are multiple playhouses, museums, and more than 100 smaller galleries. Additionally, free, live music can be found five nights a week at six venues, as part of Concerts in the Park. Nonetheless, it’s still hard to imagine that one non-profit theatre “in a garden” can accommodate 621 guests. That’s almost the size of the entire town in which it resides. Fish Creek, Wisconsin. But, Peninsula Players is a popular destination. It has been a part of Door County’s cultural scene since 1935, offering more than 500 plays in 84 seasons. In fact, this is the oldest professional resident summer theatre in the country. As such, people return to these comfortable theatre seats year after year. Some, generation after generation. What makes the theater experience even more special is its setting in the woods. The theater is designed with walls that can slide open to better appreciate the natural surroundings. Peninsula Players is a gem of a playhouse set on 16 forested acres along the shores of Green Bay. To stave off chilly nights, the theater has radiant floor heat. Finally, given the structure of the state of the art contemporary pavilion, designed by an award-winning Milwaukee architectural firm, no performance has ever been canceled because of the weather. Each season, Peninsula Players unveils five new productions, from comedy, to who-dun-it to thought provoking. Greg Vinkler, the company’s artistic director, selects a diverse variety of plays to feature each season. “If an audience member saw all five shows (which many do), I would like each experience to be completely different.” Vinkler, an actor based out of Chicago, has performed in 51 productions during his 31 years here. Additionally, he directs several of the shows each summer, and surrounds himself with award-winning talent. From Actors’ Equity Association actors, regional designers and stage managers. When not in Door County, Company members work in regional theaters from Los Angeles to New York, as well as in TV and film. “The artists of the 2019 company are exceptionally talented and very versatile,” praises Vinkler. Among those is Chicago-based Penny Slusher. Slusher is appearing in three of the Peninsula Players’ 2019 productions: “A Murder Is Announced” (July 10-28), “Silent Sky” (August 21-September 1) and “George Washington’s Teeth” (September 4-October 20), a zany comedy. In addition to her frequent roles in Chicago theatre, including the Writers Theatre, The Goodman, Northlight and Steppenwolf, she has acted at festivals in Australia and Ireland, and has several movies in her list of credits. Like many of the Peninsula Players actors, she enjoys spending summers in Wisconsin. “Door County is host to more than a few top-notch theatres,” she says. “If folks are unaware of that, then I would highly recommend attending a production here. This is an ideal spot for enjoying theatrical experiences because these venues are surrounded by the great outdoors – a perfect blend of art and nature.” This is Slusher’s third season with Peninsula Players. She notes that the theatre has a long history of attracting talented actors, directors, designers, and of course actors. “On a par with any you may find in Chicago, New York, or London,” she adds. A tad larger than Peninsula Player’s pavilion, with 725 seats, is the Door County Auditorium in Fish Creek. Open since 1991, this summer’s lineup features Roseann Cash, Mavis Staples, Lyle Lovett and the Righteous Brothers. Other nearby cultural venues are American Players Theatre in Spring Green, Northern Sky Theatre in Ephraim, Third Avenue Playhouse in Sturgeon Bay, and Birch Creek Summer and Fall Concert Series. Visit the Door County Wisconsin Visitors Bureau for an up to date listing of cultural events.

I was recently on the dating app Bumble when I came across the profile of an attractive middle-aged man, a few years younger than I am. He was born on the East Coast and had a big dog, which I liked. But then I read that he was “100 percent drama-free” and demanded that any dates be the same way. I thought, “Here’s somebody who probably won’t listen if I’m having a bad day” and swiped left to indicate my lack of interest. This guy was far from unusual. A surprisingly large number of men say they’re looking for “no drama” or something “drama-free” in their profiles, and I swipe left every time. Women write it too. But according to Tinder, which looked at the profiles of its American users earlier this year, heterosexual men were three times more likely to use these phrases than heterosexual women. Profiles of gay and lesbian users included the phrases much less often. Another dating app, OkCupid, examined the 2018 profiles of all its users in the United States without separating for sexual orientation and found that men over all were 10 percent more likely to say this than women. They also found that 47 percent of millennial men said they were looking for no drama or something drama-free in their profiles, as did 25 percent of Gen X and 12 percent of baby boomer men. I understand that people want joy, laughter and happiness in their relationships. I want that too. But when heterosexual men say they’re looking for something “drama-free,” I suspect they want something that doesn’t exist: a problem-free partnership with someone who has no life experience. Are they looking for a woman who never gets angry or afraid or sad, who never worries about her family or struggles in her job? Who would want to be with such a person? One man I came across online even wrote, “No drama given or allowed.” Aside from questionable grammar, this implies an ability to control life that none of us possess. Life is full of drama. I know. I’ve experienced it. Although I’m an even-keeled person and daily meditator, I’ve still had to face challenges over the last eight years that I never saw coming and required all my strength to endure. After 23 years of marriage, I went through an unexpected and painful divorce. Several people I love deeply suffered from addiction and found their way to recovery (a sentence that doesn’t begin to capture nearly four years of hell). I had to sell our family home and move to a rental. Then I lost my beloved dog, Spike — which, weirdly, felt the worst, coming on top of everything else. Life got messy. But I know many people, including men, who have suffered far worse. It’s hard to live for any time without facing something difficult, whether it’s financial problems, illness, divorce or death. Some people call this “drama.” I call it life. Because I didn’t quite understand what men meant when they said they were looking for “no drama,” I spoke with Jessica Carbino, a sociologist in Los Angeles who specializes in online dating and who used to work for Bumble. She told me that when men in their 20s and 30s say they want something drama-free, they’re looking for women who are “lower maintenance.” When middle-aged men use it, they’re trying to avoid the entanglements that come with former spouses and family. “They could have just gone through a terrible divorce,” Dr. Carbino told me. “They could have presumably been dealing with a lot of issues with their own families, with their children, with their ex-spouses, and they want something that doesn’t present any type of problem or issue.” Vanessa Valenti, co-founder of the feminist website Feministing, had a different take. “I think it’s pretty sexist,” she told me. “You might as well say ‘no humans,’ you know? But sexist behavior exists offline, just like it does on dating apps. This is simply another medium.” She added, “I think there are unrealistic expectations put on women to be accommodating at all times in their relationships.”

Ms. Valenti said that when men say they want no drama, “they’re signaling to others that they’re someone who’s incapable of witnessing and honoring another person’s feelings.” She also expressed concern that the numbers are higher, at least on OkCupid, the younger the men get. “It makes me wonder if it’s become more like online dating app lingo, which actually makes the ‘no drama’ potentially more dangerous because the more it’s used, the more it’s normalized as a common characteristic of a desirable partner and what a desirable partner should be,” she said. “Are we setting a precedent of the emotionless partner who has no needs? In my opinion, that would create a culture of pretty disastrous relationships.” Wouldn’t it make more sense for men and women in the dating world to look inward and develop compassion for themselves, rather than try to control the drama outside them? “When you’ve suffered in these serious ways,” Dr. Mark Epstein, a New York City psychiatrist and Buddhist author, told me, “it lets you see the suffering everywhere, if you’re not pretending that it’s not happening to you.” He said that the growth that results from looking honestly at your challenges and problems — in other words, from being vulnerable — also makes people better partners. “You might actually be more available, more open, more able to be with someone else as a result of this,” Dr. Epstein said. I also wonder if people mean it when they say they’re looking for “no drama.” Imagine “Romeo and Juliet” without the feuding future in-laws and “Brokeback Mountain” without society’s resistance to two men in love. Or “Casablanca” without the return of Ilsa’s husband, not to mention the Nazis who frequented Rick’s bar. Sometimes, love grows sweeter in contrast to the hardships. Perhaps we’re simply all on drama overload, and online profiles reflect what we’re experiencing in the world. We live on a planet whose climate is warming rapidly. We wait in fear of the next mass shooting. We have a president whose tweets elevate our heart rates daily. In a 2018 American Psychological Association survey, 69 percent of respondents reported that the future of the nation caused them stress — six percentage points higher than the year before. This precariousness seems like all the more reason to find a partner who can face the challenges and roll with them. There are days when you accidentally sideswipe your neighbor’s car or you have to check someone you love into rehab. Other days are steeped in joy. The kind of partner I’d like shows up for it all.

I recently discovered a corner of the internet that was new to me. It felt like stepping into a slightly glitchy simulation of the world of “mommy blogs,” circa 2010. There were uncomplicated, inexpensive recipes, low-key home organization guides, amateur photography — even stock photographs, the presence of which is always a sign you’re in a part of the internet where there’s probably more going on than meets the eye. The posts were remarkably ordinary, so boring that some could have been written by bots, but the very light sprinkling of personal details about the authors assured me they weren’t. “Pregnancy is a huge part of any woman’s life,” reads the beginning of one post about early pregnancy symptoms on Journey to SAHM (SAHM stands for stay-at-home mom). That statement seems arguable, as well as the suggestion that cramping or bloating would be “Weird and Shocking” to anyone with a menstrual cycle. And I’m not interested in ever being pregnant again. It was obvious 50 words into this post that it contained nothing new or helpful to me or anyone else. Yet I found myself clicking through, maybe out of a sense of incredulousness that content like this is still being produced in earnest in 2019. Some of these blog posts read like an Amy Sedaris script, like this incredibly detailed set of instructions on how to set up a “coffee station” that I bookmarked and am compelled to reread on a weekly basis (“Now there are all kinds of goodies you could stock your coffee station with,” blogger Margo of Joyful Homemaking writes, “but of course, first and foremost is a coffee maker”). When I browse these blogs, I feel lulled into a state of comfortable voyeurism, which is not how I feel when consuming content written by the gleaming-haired momfluencers I follow on Instagram. I couldn’t have hate-read these blogs if I’d tried to. “Just this last year,” Margo writes in a post about dealing with fatigue, “my hubby and I have started going to bed a lot earlier. When our kids were little, we got into the habit of staying up late, so we could have some time after they went to bed, to do what we wanted. Now though, we’ve started going to bed shortly after the kids do, and giving up most of our TV time. There’s really not much worth watching anyway.” That last line brought me an unexpected jolt of delight. There is something transgressively bland about this vein of blogs that I’d hit. Unlike most media that targets women, these bloggers are not compelled to breathlessly enthuse about every emergent pop-cultural phenomenon. Is everyone as excited as I am for the new season of Stranger Things?!... Were you as obsessed as we were with Maya Rudolph’s caftan at the Oscars last night?!!!...We NEED to know: What lipstick is AOC wearing?! Women influencers are expected to maintain an unrealistic level of enthusiasm for almost everything, and these bloggers seemed notably immune to that one particular rigor of online femininity. Internet subcultures are hard to define spatially, and I haven’t found the edge of this one yet. These homemaking blogs exist in a hard-to-differentiate sprawl. Many of them share almost identical design themes. Once you start going deep, it can feel like a hall of mirrors, stretching on forever, each site very similar to the last, yet ever so slightly distinct. Whenever I think I have a handle on the big names in this game (Sarah Titus, What Mommy Does, Just a Girl and Her Blog, TwinsMommy, and What Moms Love are among the higher-traffic sites), I’ll stumble upon a new, almost identical blog that seems to be just as popular. It’s hard to parse how you’d choose to become a fan of one over another. More than once I had the sensation that I was reading in a second language, as though there must be layers of meaning that I wasn’t able to pick up on. And yet I’m a native English speaker, a student of digital culture. The “about” pages of these blogs almost always feature unretouched photos of women who look like anyone you might see at the grocery store. They are almost always stay-at-home moms, and they sometimes identify their children by name, but not often. God usually gets name-checked. The more popular sites seem to host about 100,000–200,000 pageviews per month, which is a tiny fraction of the traffic received by Instafamous momfluencers like Love Taza, Cupcakes and Cashmere, and LaTonya Yvette, all of which have monthly pageviews well into the millions. These women are not, as far as I can tell, trying to build brands around their personalities. Which compels a seasoned internet traveler to ask: What are they doing? What’s really going on in this strange, aggressively boring corner of the internet? Most lifestyle blogs today — and many larger websites that publish shopping content or product reviews, including BuzzFeed — practice some form of affiliate marketing through links. For example, each time someone clicks through to Nordstrom’s website to see which tiny gold earrings the women at Cup of Jo are “all in love with,” and then buys those earrings, Cup of Jo earns a small commission. And many bloggers make money more directly from selling printables (files you can download, either for free or for a fee, and then print out at home as many times as you like), recipe collections, lifestyle guides, and other downloadable extensions of their brand. As I clicked around these mysteriously bland mommy blogs, it gradually started to become clear: The reason for their existence is affiliate marketing and e-commerce. What’s different about this specific blog ecosystem is that the product many of the bloggers are selling is guides to setting up your own affiliate-linked blog or Shopify site, where you can sell your printables. The content of those printables and blog posts themselves seems secondary — their primary purpose is to give the blog a reason to exist. Affiliate links often take you to recommended products on Amazon, like craft supplies or housewares (or in the case of the Journey to SAHM post on pregnancy symptoms, Citrucel and an ovulation test kit), but more often they link to online courses on blogging. “Want to learn how to start a blog from home, mama?” asks a post on TwinsMommy.com that has been shared 46,000 times. Most of these blogs feature a post exactly like this one: a friendly, first-person invitation to try something new. The tone is reminiscent of a late-night infomercial, acknowledging a shared difficulty alongside the promise of a secret to overcoming it. “I’m sure you read a lot of mom blogs, go on Facebook, and hang out on Pinterest when your little one is sleeping,” continues the TwinsMommy post. “You see everyone online with their blog, and you’re wondering, how do I start a blog? You want to join this awesome community. I can’t blame you. I’ve been blogging for two years on this blog and let me tell you, starting a mom blog was the best decision I ever made.” Suddenly the oddly haphazard nature of the posts I was seeing made sense. These aren’t blogs primarily meant for telling a story, or establishing someone’s digital personality — they’re blogs for earning money. And among the most popular items for sale, it would seem, are guides for how to make money through blogging. They are blogs about blogging. The substance of the blogs — guidance on motherhood and domesticity — is often so thinly reconstituted that it’s basically motherhood tips from a content farm. Rather than writing about their own personal experiences or expertise, the mothers producing it seem to be following a set of conventions that they learn in the online blogging courses they buy. The result is a uniformity of tone and content that fails to conjure anything real. It’s a simulation of motherhood engineered to earn a bit of income for mothers. Many of these blogs publish “income reports” where the bloggers itemize how much their blog earned them each month, and discuss their best-selling items, their challenges, and their sales goals. These reports — which are common among more established lifestyle bloggers as well — appear to exist as a nod toward transparency, but in this case they also act as a kind of sales pitch to convince readers that a blogger’s advice is worth paying for. Their accuracy is unverifiable, and appears to be completely up to the bloggers’ discretion. Elna Cain is the blogger behind TwinsMommy and several other blogs, all of which she told me are “profitable.” Cain is in her thirties and lives in Ontario, Canada, and has been blogging since 2014, when her maternity leave ended and she realized she didn’t want to return to her job of working as a teacher’s aide and autism specialist. Cain wouldn’t disclose her income, but told me it’s “much more than I could make at any job.” Her main sources of income are the blogging courses she has developed herself, which she sells for around $90 each. The courses are designed for bloggers who are just starting out and want to grow their audience and improve their moneymaking capabilities. Although anyone could apply Cain’s courses to their blogs, she acknowledged that her clientele is mainly aspiring mommy bloggers — members of this existing ecosystem. If you look at it from the right angle, this type of blogging begins to resemble a cousin of multilevel marketing (MLM). Multilevel marketing typically involves a pyramidlike structure wherein very successful salespeople recruit other salespeople, who in turn are encouraged to recruit others. More established salespeople earn a commission from the sales made by their recruits, hence the “multilevel” dimension. The high earners at the top of the pile serve as motivation to newbies, and a big part of what they sell isn’t a physical product at all, but the promise of independent wealth and success, whether it comes from selling yoga leggings or teaching yoga classes. The idea is that “If I can do it, so can you.” The financial model in this case is inverted, in a sense; successful bloggers at the top of the figurative pyramid can earn income through newer bloggers sharing links to their products (printables or “blogging tools” and guides), while those less established bloggers earn a small affiliate commission. Bloggers often invest a significant amount of money on these tools to get them started, but there’s no guarantee that your upfront investment will pay off; after all, the internet is filled with stories of women who have gone into perilous debt while trying to earn money as LuLaRoe leggings salespeople. And the overlap with MLM is multilayered; many bloggers sell printables with instructions for making your own essential oil blends, which is another branch of the giant MLM tree in American economic life. “Ahh your so good at this blogging thing!” one commenter wrote under a 2017 TwinsMommy post about the blog’s financial growth. “I have been at it for 4 years and still not monetised — you need to teach me your ways.” I asked Cain if she felt that some would-be mommy bloggers risked wasting their money on courses. “Anyone can make courses nowadays, right?” she said. “I find that you need to know the blogger behind the course, know their journey.” Cain admitted that many people spend money on blogging courses and then lose momentum and never use them. “I hear stories on Facebook from people who have spent hundreds of dollars on these courses. It’s a big investment.” But from her point of view, the issue is not with the material they’ve paid for. “A lot of people who have bought my courses don’t go into the course. A lot of people buy, and they have that quick idea that this could work, but they lose motivation.” I suspect you could trace much of the popularity of both MLMs and this style of blogging among American women back to a common cause. The stresses of contemporary life have made it increasingly difficult for anyone to embody the archetype of the tender, order-giving mother. Printables and this ecosystem of blogging, not to mention all the momfluencers working hard on Instagram and elsewhere, are capitalizing on the tantalizing offer of this still very powerful cultural role, which is theoretically available to anyone, regardless of privilege. Motherhood as a social construct is becoming increasingly entrepreneurial, as social safety nets fray and being a stay-at-home nurturer — or even a nurturer with a full-time-job — becomes increasingly unfeasible for many women. The US government guarantees virtually no paid maternity leave, and no accessible, affordable daycare. Young families are on their own. So the painful underbelly of the exalted momtrepreneurial side hustle is the fact that for many women, the side hustle is keeping the lights on. And the central question for the entrepreneurial yet ordinary mother is: what to sell? Wealthy or stylish moms can sell ads and products by trading on their appearance and their aspirational — or perfectly imperfect — lifestyle, but what does an ordinary, unglamorous woman have that the public will want to buy? In barren, late-capitalist terrain, selling the ability to blog, even if that blog itself will be about little more than the act of blogging, seems to be a viable commodity. For the first decade of the history of blogs (which most people agree started around 1994), most blogs were unpaid creative outlets for people with day jobs who wanted a place to post their writing. They were (and are!) cheap and fast to set up, requiring very little expertise. Blogging was first and foremost a tool for people who needed to write and didn’t want to wait for some publication’s permission. In that way, blogs were a tool of personal liberation. They allowed great writers to be discovered, and then to get paid for their work by getting published by larger outlets, or by running ads on their sites as their audiences grew. Eventually, marketing evolved to reward the most popular bloggers with sponsorships, and social media (especially Instagram) created an efficient, consistent platform for those sponsorship deals, and thus we have influencers. The curious thing about the affiliate marketing and Shopify mommy blogs is that their history moves in the opposite direction: These bloggers — who generally don’t have other jobs — start their blogs initially hoping for a source of extra income, and then teach themselves to write posts and draw in readers as a way to reach their sales goals. Hena Bilal, who runs MendingWithGold.com, is a 34-year-old stay-at-home mother of two based in Pakistan and has been blogging for two years. Her husband serves in the Pakistani military, and she was a schoolteacher before deciding to stay at home with her first child. But her blog reads as though it’s addressing an American audience, and she told me that most of her traffic comes from the US. Bilal first heard about the promise of affiliate marketing blogging on Pinterest. “I started blogging in order to be able to stay home with my son but also without having any financial worries,” she wrote to me. “I would read everywhere that blogging provided just that!” Bilal wrote on her blog that she invested over $2,500 on blogging when she was starting out. After two years, Bilal told me she currently makes about $200 a month blogging, but she hopes to someday reach her goal of $5,000 a month, at which point she plans to take her family on a religious pilgrimage, as well as “sponsor” 20 kids whose parents don’t have the means to support them. (On her blog, Bilal writes, “I don’t know where the 20 came from, but since my class made fun of this number, I decided to stick to it!”) Bilal seems committed to blogging for profit, despite being far from reaching her earnings goals; by my calculation, she’s only just breaking even now, given what she initially invested. “I know have a long way to go. A blog biz is NOT for everyone,” she wrote me. “It’s NOOOOT easy money at all. But IT IS real! I confirm this.” And I find myself rooting for her. Unlike some of these blogs about blogging, Mending With Gold contains flashes of personality amid the fairly predictable advice about surviving motherhood. In a post about how to carve out moments for self-care during the day, Bilal writes, “Go to an empty room and just enjoy the alone time in there. Let everyone wreak havoc outside. They’re doing that all the time anyway.” The odd moments when these writers let their guards down — which is something that Instafamous momfluencers almost never allow themselves to do — are ultimately what make these blogs fascinating to me. A distinct written voice is also what first drew me to Sarah Titus’s blog, which was my entry point into this ecosystem. Titus is an exemplar of Shopify guru-hood, with a very compelling rags-to-riches origin story and a strident but disarming candor that sets her apart from her more Stepford-sounding counterparts. “Six years ago,” she writes in the “My Story” section of her blog, “I was living in a homeless shelter and had $30k worth of debt. My ex-husband was on his 3rd affair and my kids and I had nothing except what I could pack in a small car. The shelter was dirty, people were always sick, the food was so old I wouldn’t serve it to a starving dog, and there were no windows.” She ended up divorcing her adulterous husband, only to be ordered by a judge to get a job to support her kids. “I BELIEVE THAT MOST WOMEN CAN QUIT WORKING AND STAY HOME WITH THEIR KIDS IF THAT’S WHAT THEY WANT TO DO,” she declares in her story. “Does it take sacrifice, yes, hard work, yes, but you CAN get there and I’m committed to showing you how!!!” Titus’s narrative involves extreme frugality on her part, a cast of unsupportive characters who don’t understand her commitment to staying home with her kids, and after some twists and turns, she starts a blog. The dissonance between the pink-and-white sterility of her website and the roiling defensiveness of her tone can be a little jarring, but ultimately, she grabs your attention. “When I first started blogging, I used the blog as more of a journal to get out my feelings,” Titus told me. “The audience that I attracted connected to my story. A lot of people say, don’t do a journal-style blog now, but as humans we all want to connect. We all crave to be loved on. Yes, teach something too, but we need to show empathy. Like in pictures on Pinterest, people crop off the heads of people, but I like to keep the heads of people on there, because the picture should relate to people.” Titus’s more confessional style echoes the early mommy blogs of a decade ago, and I asked her if she felt that her success was due to her candor. “Your story sells,” she said. “It always sells. I was coaching [another blogger], and they were more professional, clinical, and I started teaching them — ‘Okay, share more of your personality. Share more of your story.’ And they started interjecting their own heart into it, and now they’re doing a lot better.” Today, Titus is one of the so-called six-figure bloggers — bloggers who clear six figures annually in Shopify sales or affiliate-link revenue. She has a P.O. box in Pennsylvania, but declined to share where in the US she lives; she’s very protective of her privacy. Her income comes from a dizzying array of printables that she designs herself, courses that she creates on how to run a Shopify business, and affiliate sellers who sell her courses on their websites. Affiliates earn a small cut of their sales of her products, but she pockets the majority. Titus offers many single-sheet printables as freebies on her site; her more lucrative printables come in large themed packs of documents called binders. She sells Christmas and Easter binders, medical binders, essential oil recipe binders, binders to help organize your housecleaning; most of these cost $67. Her most expensive binder, the Shopify binder (which helps you keep your Shopify business organized) sells for almost $300; she advertises it with the claim that she earned more than $52,000 through Shopify sales in her first month using the tool. Titus told me — and it seems true — that she is essentially alone at the top of the heap in this niche. “I found a hole in the blogging industry where no one else was. No one else was creating binders at that time. So I wanted to be that binder queen,” she said. “That’s how I made my way into this niche where there was no one else. I don't have any competition.” In an email, Titus told me that she earned $2.8 million in revenue through her Shopify sales of printables last year. This figure strains credulity, but I am not in a position to directly dispute it. And no matter what the exact numbers are, she has a good reputation in the mommy blogging–for-profit community. “I do trust her,” Bilal told me in an email. “If you’re on her email list, or in blogging communities where she hangs out, you’ll see she gives more than she gets. Sometimes you doubt why she’s giving away everything. … People WANT to pay her even for her freebies.” And that, in a way, is the larger mystery to me. Anyone who reads these blogs has access to a computer with basic graphic design tools, so what makes these printables so appealing? I probably would have clicked out of this blog ecosystem without giving it much thought if it hadn’t been for the zany presence of all these printables. The concept has been trendy on Pinterest and Etsy for several years, and the variety of printables being given and sold on these stay-at-home mom blogs is dizzying: There are templates for grocery lists and weekly meal plans, daily and monthly calendar printouts, monthly workout plans, templates for keeping track of medication, packing lists for a family trip to Disney, Bible study plans, charts to keep track of how much water you’re drinking, and daily gratitude prompts that you can color in yourself, internalizing your gratitude while you color. There is also a huge wall art subgenre, featuring graphics you can personalize with a name or initials, or positive affirmations like “Rest and Recharge,” or seasonal exhortations like “Let It Snow!” Most wall art printables remind me of decorative features you might find in the knickknack-filled dining room of a rural bed-and-breakfast: homey, unpretentious, but maybe a little bit overbearing. At first, I struggled to believe that people were spending money for very simply designed templates for grocery lists. Once printed out, wouldn’t these lists just clutter up your kitchen? In a world that increasingly demands that content be free, it made no sense to me that people were willing to pay money for amateur graphic design adorning boxes marked with the days of the week. Can’t people make their own lists, with a pen and paper? Are the templates really that appealing? Apparently, they are. Bilal told me she hadn’t planned to sell printables on her blog, but she observed how popular they were among successful bloggers like Titus, Ruth of LivingWellSpendingLess.com, and Laura at IHeartPlanners, and decided to try selling them herself. “I keep hearing ... from bloggers who have been doing this for more than a decade, that the demand for printables, for some reason, has never diminished,” Bilal wrote me. “Even after everything print publishing has undergone in the last 20 years with the rise of the digital world.” Both Bilal and Titus remarked that people just like to write things down by hand, and that for many people, printables are more intuitive and useful than maintaining digital lists. Linda Tieu, an American who has lived in Tuscany for the past several years, is a graphic designer who runs her own printables shop on Etsy and is an avowed fan of the phenomenon. “I moved to Italy when I got married, and I didn’t have as much access to things that I used to have access to,” Tieu said. “You know, like going to Target. Printables meant I could access anything related to scrapbooking, card-making, paper arts — and print it myself.” Tieu isn’t a blogger, but she explained to me that printables are a useful marketing tool for bloggers who are trying to increase their audience’s engagement. “In any kind of online business, the thing [experts] are always saying is, give something to someone so you can get their email! Something useful for your audience! Printables can be something to attract people.” (Most of these blogs invite readers to subscribe to their newsletters, per the advice of many blogging guides, which recommend getting readers’ email addresses to maintain engagement over time.) I can’t say I didn’t begin to understand the appeal of printables, the more time I spent in their environment. The idea of a “Wi-Fi printable” seems sensible; why don’t people put their Wi-Fi information where people can easily see it? I can imagine using weekly meal-planning printables, if only as a means to remind me that meal planning saves my husband and I from having a daily text exchange at 3 p.m. about what we’re going to have for dinner. Would my kids be pleased if I framed personalized printables of their names and hung them on their bedroom walls? Probably! How you organize your home is, like everything else, a class issue. Not everyone can afford hundred-dollar sets of clear plastic canisters for their kitchens, and many can’t relate to the interiors featured in Apartment Therapy. For a significant population of North American women, domestic organization has a look and feel that is quite distinct from the sun-drenched, white-tiled restraint that has come to define upscale media representations of successful tidiness. The look is more like an enthusiastically decorated elementary school classroom. And it owes a lot to 8.5 x 11 printer paper. The triumph of being able to spend time with one’s kids while earning money from home forms the backbone of this blogging subculture’s raison d’être. It’s what animates many of the people — especially women — who sell products through MLMs too. And I’m not interested in criticizing the bloggers trying to make money from affiliate links or by shilling guides to setting up a Shopify shop. Multilevel marketing always operates on the exploitation of the world’s only truly renewable resource: the hopes and aspirations of everyday people. And it’s the structure of that marketing system, not the women who get caught up trying to game it, that deserves criticism. Ultimately, bundling a bunch of SEO and content marketing best practice advice and selling it to aspiring mommy bloggers is just another dot on the radar screen of capitalist exploitation. After all, lots of wealthy, conventionally attractive, or otherwise magnetic women become influencers and instrumentalize their roles as nurturers for money. Some influencers are naturally gifted storytellers, but a lot of them are awful writers. So if natural creative talent isn’t a prerequisite for making money off the internet, why shouldn’t women who don’t necessarily fit the influencer mold have their kick at the can too? Blogging by mothers, about being mothers, has never been taken seriously; the term “mommy blog” says it all, really. As Natalie Jean Lovin (who was one of the big names in Mormon mommy blogging through the mid-aughts, before getting out of the game) said in an article last year in the Cut, “there would be a Pulitzer Prize for blogging, if men did it more.” Yet the digital economy continues to colonize new products and services, and mothers are hugely influential producers and consumers of media. It’s hardly scandalizing that capitalism has pivoted to moms, and that moms have engaged with its opportunities and costs to the extent that they’re blogging purely for profit (or in hope of it), rather than for catharsis or as a public service. What is more interesting to me about this shadow-realm of mommy blogs that simulate other, more successful blogs in the hopes of earning money is the way it feels a bit like peering around a bend into a future paradigm of online life. Though it might be tempting to characterize this niche economy in dystopian terms, I think it’s better described as marginal. These blogs read like assemblages of information and content scavenged from other parts of the internet, like a content favela mushrooming up around the gleaming cities where the high-paid influencers live. And I think the content these blogs produce — the sea of printables — are a sign of hope, more than anything else. To be able to exert control over your domain as a mother with flair, and love, and resourcefulness, is something that few people, regardless of income, have the time and resources to do. Sarah Titus understands this keenly. At the conclusion of her story of overcoming adversity and becoming a successful blogger, she appeals to her readers. “Do you feel like the bills and walls are closing in on you? Do you feel like you can’t seem to get your blog to make the income you know it CAN make? Do you feel stuck? Like you’ve lost hope and you’re spiraling? Maybe you feel like you should quit blogging,” she writes. “Don’t quit,” she continues. “You can do this! I’ve been there, and I’m excited to show you how I overcame it all! I’m excited you’re here. Let’s walk this journey together!” Capitalism does not reward nurturing; it is a job that is done for free. As the role of mother and nurturer becomes harder to play, given people’s time and financial constraints, we fetishize it ever more fiercely. And even though the ability to nurture can’t be bought, that won’t stop people from trying to evoke it, copy it, reconstitute it, and sell it, until there’s no more money left to spend.

When I arrived at USC 11 years ago as dean of religious life, my pastoral conversations with students mostly focused on their quests for meaning and purpose. They were striving to translate values into action, cultivate joy and gratitude, live extraordinary lives. But over the last several years, these conversations have taken a devastating turn. Whereas students used to ask “How should I live?” they are now more likely to ask “Why should I live?” Where they used to talk about hope and meaning; now they grapple with hopelessness and meaninglessness. Every year, it seems, I encounter more stress, anxiety, and depression, and more students in crisis on campus. My colleagues at other universities say they are seeing the same distressing trend, and research backs up our observations. I never got the question in my first five years at USC that I now get almost daily from students: “How do I make friends?” According to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health, the increase in utilization rates for counseling centers across the country over the last five years has greatly outpaced the increase in student enrollment, and as a result, schools have trouble hiring enough mental health counselors to keep up with growing demand. The most recent Healthy Minds Survey, an annual report on mental health on college and university campuses, found that one-third of undergraduate students in the United States wrestle with some kind of mental health issue, while more than 10% struggle with thoughts of suicide. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program’s large annual survey of college freshmen has noted a marked and steady downward trend in the self-reported emotional health of students along with a large uptick in self-reported feelings of being overwhelmed. What I have noticed in my work with students is that many of them face the same hidden root challenge: loneliness. According to a recent survey by the global health service company Cigna, the loneliest generation in the United States today is not the oldest Americans but the youngest, specifically young adults between 18 and 22 years old. I never got the question in my first five years at USC that I now get almost daily from students: “How do I make friends?” Students may have thousands of friends online, but few in real life; they may be experts at talking with their thumbs, but not so much with their tongues. As a result, many feel as though they don’t have a tribe or a sense of belonging. They feel disconnected from what it means to be human. While it is now fashionable to refer to this cohort of college and university students as a coddled generation of “snowflakes,” the reality is they face unprecedented challenges and circumstances. They are entering a world in which many of the career paths of their parents’ generation no longer exist or have changed drastically. They face escalating tuition costs with little sense of whether their future opportunities justify the outlay. They have participated in active shooter trainings and campus lockdown drills for most of their lives. And according to the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion and Public Life, more than one-third of young adults are now disaffiliated with religion, marking a dramatic generational shift away from religion and from the comfort and community that it can provide. The convergence of these factors and realities has directly contributed to a crippling sense of anxiety and alienation in students across the country. But today’s students are also creative and courageous, engaged and empathetic, diverse and inclusive. They are hardworking and goal-oriented. It needs to be the job of colleges and universities to help students develop resources that enable them to thrive and flourish mentally, emotionally and spiritually, so that they may fulfill their academic aspirations and achieve their professional goals. At USC, we’re trying a variety of things, including a dedicated mindfulness training app and free mindfulness programs that reach more than 7,000 people a year. A new, for-credit freshman course called Thrive focuses on emotional intelligence, healthy relationships, self-care, resiliency and human flourishing. In the fall, we will debut our new artificial intelligence well-being assistant, named Ari, which will guide students to appropriate support resources and communities on campus. We also offer and host yoga classes, drum circles, friendship courses, community teas, coloring sessions, laughing groups, sleep classes, connection workshops, meditation retreats, campfire conversations and primal scream opportunities. We’ve recently appointed our first director of belonging, while our full-time wellness dog, Professor Beauregard Tirebiter (affectionately known as “Beau”) strolls the campus daily. Colleges and universities have always had a responsibility to develop the whole student so that our young people are able to make not just a living, but a life. Today, that means examining a new range of challenges that students face and developing a new approach to well-being on campus. By doing so, colleges and universities can help empower students to transform the world by transforming themselves.

Last night, football fans witnessed the greatest comeback in Super Bowl history. With eight minutes and 30 seconds left in the third quarter, the New England Patriots were down 28-3. But they inched forward until they pushed the game into overtime—a first for the Super Bowl—and Patriots quarterback Tom Brady marched his team down the field to win Super Bowl LI. It was an epic turnaround, but it wasn’t really the Patriots that made it happen. Every mistake that let them come back could have been avoided. And my life at the blackjack table can shed light on what the Atlanta Falcons did wrong. Every decision in blackjack can be dictated by simple math: There’s always a right and wrong answer. The average blackjack player loses about three percent of the money they put on the table—but if you play basic strategy perfectly, you reduce the casino’s edge to about 0.5 percent. Still, even if they know the right thing to do, very few people actually play perfect basic strategy. Why? Because humans are subject to cognitive bias. That’s what brought the Falcons down tonight. It’s more complex than blackjack, of course, but there is a basic strategy for football coaching. If you analyze the thousands of football games played in the last 10 years, you can devise a set of rules that almost always lead to a win. Computers do the hard work: They take all the possible situations and calculate the probability of each outcome. A coach could input possession, down, distance, and score and come up with one best decision for the team at that moment. All you need to do is follow the math. But, like in blackjack, it can be hard to keep focus on time-tested statistical strategies under stress. Let’s start midway through the third quarter, when the Falcons were up 28-3. At that point, they had about a 98 percent chance to win. The Patriots took a full six minutes to score a touchdown. even with the score tightening, the Falcons had the advantage. That’s when the crazy stuff happened. Up 28-9 with two minutes left, the Falcons had a 99 percent chance to win the game. That probability comes from readily available calculators—which run Monte Carlo simulations, taking into account the four variables of possession, down, distance, and score. But then the Falcons made a series of errors in basic strategy. The first mistake that quarterback Matt Ryan and the Falcons made was not letting the clock run down to fewer than 10 seconds on every play. Every second that they waste is a second that the Patriots don’t have to advance. Simple. But in play after play, the Falcons snapped the ball when they didn’t need to, sometimes with more than 20 seconds left to go. In blackjack, this is like standing a soft 17: an ace and six. Normally, a hand that adds up to 17 is a losing hand—but the beauty of the ace is you can play it as an 11 or a one. If you get dealt a 10, you can play the ace as a one and you still have 17. There is no risk to taking one more card. And there is no risk in letting the clock run down under 10 seconds. The second basic strategy mistake the Falcons made was not rushing the football when they had a comfortable lead. Over the course of the game, the Falcons were gaining an above-average 5.8 yards per rush (the league average is around 4.3 yards per play). Very little good could come from a pass at this point in the game—an incomplete pass is bad, a sack is bad, and a holding penalty is bad—especially when you're already averaging 5.8 yards per rush. Again, this basic strategy would have carried little risk. All night, the Falcons had played aggressively—and it worked. With 4:40 left, they had the ball at the Patriot’s 22-yard line with an eight-point lead. Again, that's a stunning 99 percent chance to win based on the score, along with the fact that the Falcons had the ball with almost a sure field goal. Any simulation going forward would tell you the Falcons just needed to run. They could have taken a knee three times in a row and kicked a field goal. But instead they decided to pass. And pass. And pass. Atlanta head coach Dan Quinn and offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan thought they needed to be aggressive the rest of the night. But all they needed to do was play basic strategy—and let the clock run. What they did was akin to hitting a 15 when the dealer has a six showing: They put themselves at risk. And the result is the craziest turnaround in Super Bowl history.

We’re running for president and running major multinational companies. We’ve won Nobel Prizes, commanded space shuttles, flown combat missions and won the World Cup three times. In almost every arena imaginable, women have proved themselves equal to men. Except one. We don’t have enough pockets. This may sound trivial to men walking around loaded with pockets. It may be something that has never crossed your mind. While the reason for the lack of pockets in women’s clothing may be rooted in history, today there is no excuse for this depressing fashion double standard. Women, too, need a convenient place to stash keys, wallets and phones without having to lug a purse on a hike or into a meeting. We need the pockets men have always had. Rare as they are, I go out of my way to purchase clothes with pockets. Whenever I wear my favorite dress, one with big, visible (and functional) pockets stitched on the front, women chase me down to ask where I bought it. This winter, my daughter got incensed when she realized her new ski pants had faux pockets on the front. She didn’t even have a place to stash her lip balm, while her brother’s ski pants literally had pockets on top of pockets. (She’s buying boy’s ski pants next season.) Ask any women about pockets and you’ll see you’ve touched a nerve. When a London woman tweeted a photo last fall of her friend’s bridal gown — with pockets — the internet went bonkers. The same thing happened after a wedding this winter when a bridesmaid tweeted that she, the other bridesmaids, and the bride all had dresses with pockets. (“And yes, we did use them for storing snacks, thank you for asking,” she wrote.) Important as it is not to be loaded down with a purse on your wedding day, pockets are not just for brides. As a recent 99% Invisible podcast on the issue of women’s pockets points out, female police officers in Oakland routinely buy men’s uniform pants because they can’t fit the important things they need to do their jobs into the smaller pockets of the women’s uniforms. It wasn’t always this way. Once upon a time, women had voluminous pockets, though not always attached to their clothes. Starting in the 17th century, women’s pockets were stringed, silken drawbags they tied around their waists and wore under their petticoats. Those petticoats, and the dresses worn over them, had openings in the side seams so women could conveniently reach into the invisible pockets and grab whatever they might need: a coin, a comb, a snuffbox, even, as in the novel “Tess of the D’Urbervilles,” secret things like a bottle of gin. There was no need to carry around a pesky handbag that you could forget or that a thief could snatch. By the end of the 18th century, petticoats and hoop skirts were out, and so were pockets. The empire waist dresses and profile of slimmer-fitting clothes left no room for them. The purse (or reticule, which even Jane Austen called a “ridicule” back in the day) had arrived. Men, meanwhile, continued to have ever more, and maybe even too many pockets: Among suit jackets, waistcoats and trousers, men in the 1940s had an average of two dozen pockets! Today, even when women do have pockets, they’re often ludicrously nonfunctional. When two digital journalists at the website the Pudding analyzed the front pockets of 80 pairs of jeans, they found less than half of pockets in women’s jeans could fit an iPhoneX, a wallet, or even a woman’s hand, while all of the men’s pockets could fit phones, wallets and large hands. The analysis confirmed, the authors wrote, “what every woman already knew: women’s pockets are ridiculous.” When I hear about the start-ups being created to design women’s clothing with functional pockets I have to laugh. Start-ups for pockets? Give me a break. We need start-ups to create virtual reality and driverless cars, redefine banking, provide clean water to villages or cure cancer, not do something as simple as put pockets into and onto women’s clothes. This is not a hard problem for clothing designers to fix. The lack of pockets is something women have been complaining about for at least two centuries, says Hannah Carlson, a senior lecturer at the Rhode Island School of Design who is writing a history of the pocket. Pockets, Carlson says, imbue their owners with many attributes both sexes desire equally: being prepared, mobile and hands-free. This issue isn’t just about fashion. It’s about equality. It’s time we women had the pockets we deserve.

Miguel Sapochnik didn’t get off on the right foot when he was brought on as a replacement director during “Game of Thrones” Season 5. He had left his passport in Los Angeles and by the time he arrived in Belfast, 30 members of the production team were at a quarry waiting for the director to approve the location for the epic battle in “Hardhome.” Sapochnik, unprepared and not knowing how to respond, simply said, “Sure.” He was then promptly left by himself in Belfast and told to check out other sets, which were 60 miles apart. Production designer Deborah Riley took pity on the new director and stayed behind to show him around. “If I had not have had Deb, I would have never found any of those places, I would have sunk at that point,” said Sapochnik when he was guest on IndieWire’s Filmmaker Toolkit podcast. “And later on, I realized that was kind of their policy. It’s like sink or swim, and I’d lost my passport on the way, so it’s like, ‘This guy’s an idiot, let’s let him sink.'” On day two of shooting “The Gift,” part of the director’s two-episode block along with “Hardhome,” Sapochnik ran into problems with creators David Benioff and D. B. Weiss. He shot a scene of Cersei and Tommen through bars, to symbolize being imprisoned. Then, in shooting Maester Aemon’s death bed scene, Sapochnik graphically matched the cut, magically transitioning Aemon to his funeral pyre with his bed pillow still under his head. “[Benioff and Weiss] said [it was] ‘so self-conscious and we hate it basically,'” recalled Sapochnik, who quickly learned Benioff and Weiss liked a classic, unified, David Lean style and frowned on a director imposing his own specific cinematic flair to their show. “I was visually policed for the first three months of my shoot and it made the creation of ‘Hardhome’ really difficult because I pissed them off.” With “Hardhome,” Sapochnik struggled with the incredible scope of the battle as it was originally written, considering how few days he had to shoot the scene. He was working with a location in which the still water around the quarry looked nothing like the ocean written into the script, and he was having to shoot around the King’s Landing set, which had to be preserved for future seasons. “I remember standing there one day and I was like, ‘OK,'” said Sapochnik. “‘If I look that direction, that direction, or that direction it’s all visual effects. How the fuck am I going to shoot this?'” What’s more, the visual effects demands of the scene required the director to pre-visualize scenes he didn’t want to fully design. He preferred a more experiential approach to creating the chaos of battle on set and finding the best way to capture it. Turning his negatives into positives, the director took an approach that served as the basis for how he would direct future battles. First, he would limit the scope of what could be seen in frame, placing the white walkers on the other side of a wall they would break down like in a horror film. He then would create an environment to stage real visceral action he could capture, not design. “The problem I have with most action scenes today is they are too designed,” said Sapochnik. “I can’t shoot this if I can’t create a sustainable environment for my actors to work in. I wanted to create a place, a playground the actors could get so immersed in it that they were in the real thing.” Sapochnik learned early in his TV career the key to making something look real was to engage and involve the extras, and one of the real assets on “Game of Thrones” was the 250-300 highly engaged extras he could use to create controlled chaos. “We had a group of extras who were insanely loyal to the show and they were ready and they’d do bloody anything,” said Sapochnik. The director created a space and environment to stage battle games, like bulldog, for the extras and 60 stunt performers in what was a largely safe environment (but a few real punches were thrown). “The style that evolved from ‘Hardhome,’ that then was used subsequently as we went through the rest of ‘Game of Thrones’ was born in part out of weird necessity to find a functional and efficient way of shooting,” said Sapochnik. “And at the same time to do it without shaking things up, because that’s what Dan and David did not want.” After the success of “Hardhome,” Sapochnik not only found himself free from being visually policed, when he returned to direct “Battle of the Bastards” during Season 6, he found Weiss and Benioff allowed him the freedom to use more cameras — up to four — and a faster shutter speed, both of which were definite no-no’s on the show. He wasn’t expected to pre-viz his shot exactly like he would ultimately shoot them on location either. What’s more, when he did disagree with the creators, or need to reign in the scope of an episode, or wanted to change the narrative arc of a battle scene, he learned how best to approach his now supportive collaborators.” Dan and David don’t want to be told you can’t do something,” said Sapochnik. “You need to offer a solution as well.”

This the way the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper. And so Mark Sanchez becomes the latest in a long line of would be Jets saviors shuffles off his mortal career coil and ascends into the eternal afterlife that is a career in broadcasting. Rex Ryan. Bart Scott. Damien Woody. Mark Brunell. And now The Sanchize. They couldn’t save the Jets, make them relevant for more than a season or two, or take away the back pages of the tabloids for any of the right reasons. But when TV is looking for someone to sit behind a desk and provide us keen insights into how you’ve got to have a good pass rush and be able to tun and stop the run, those 2009-14 Jets are the go-to franchise. It seems like it was a hell of a lot longer than just eight years ago that the Jets gave Cleveland the No. 17 pick, the No. 52 pick and three players to move up to the No. 5 spot and draft Sanchez. He was going to be their next Joe Namath, the guy who’d quarterbacked a major college football factory and also brought the intangibles that can only come from looking like the country club pool lifeguard in a hot mom’s sex fantasy. I’ll never forget the reaction of Jets fans to news of the trade and the selection. They were positively giddy. They had their rookie head coach in Ryan, who had immediately declared he wasn’t there to kiss Bill Belichick’s rings. They had an aggressive front office making a bold move. And a magazine cover-worthy franchise QB. Finally, they’d arrived. The only monkey in the wrench for them were a few words from Pete Carroll, saying he thought Sanchez wasn’t ready for the NFL. Which were immediately dismissed as mere mellow-harshing from a coach who’s bitter about losing his best shot at a national title. And when the Jets went 9-7 and 11-5 with two straight trips to the AFC championship game the next two seasons, there didn’t seem to be any reason to doubt they’d made the right move and Carroll was just looking out for Carroll. The inarguable highlight in that run was his astonishing 16-for-25, 194 Yard, 3 TDs, 0 INTs, 127.3 Passer Rating performance in a 28-21 win at New England in the 2010 Divisional game. That Patriots team was a wagon. Tom Brady was the unanimous league MVP. And that night, the second best quarterback on the field as everyone in the stadium sat there waiting for Sanchez to make a mistake that never came. That is No. 3 on my list of the all time most groin-kicking losses in Patriots history, behind only the two Super Bowls That Shall Not Be Named. And the consensus in virtually all of the New England media was that the Jets had passed the Patriots and created the blueprint for winning in the decade of 2010s. Yeah. About that… 2010 was peak Sanchez, and his career was all down a Double Black Diamond hill from there, without knowing how to ski. The Jets never made it back to the playoffs with him. He returned to his rookie form of throwing more interceptions than touchdowns, which pretty much turned out to be his factory settings as he finished his career with 86 TDs to 89 INTs. By 2012 they were welcoming the Tim Tebow traveling circus to town. In 2013 they’d draft Geno Smith to take over the quarterbacking. Sanchez missed that entire season with an injury, but was in Philly the following year. And Ryan was gone soon after that. Both of them just more false hope for a franchise that is one of the world’s leading producers and exporters of false hope. Mark Sanchez might be good on TV. God knows the camera will love him. But regardless of how he does, he’ll always be the guy who played in some of the most unforgettable games of the Patriots’ Dynasty, good and bad. The guy at the center of perhaps the greatest single play in NFL history: It's been called the "butt fumble" and it's easily one of the worst plays in QB Mark Sanchez's career and in the history of the NFL. But mostly as yet another guy who taught yet another generation what it means to be a Jets fan. Godspeed, Sanchize.

As a 5-year-old kid, I barely knew what the word rhythm meant. At least no one told me what banging on inanimate objects and creating my own little beats might be called. It was like rhythm chose me and I really had no say in the matter. My favorite elementary school pastime was tabletop drum battles with my friends. I’d play on the table using every part of my hand to get a sound: the base of my palm for low sounds, the middle of my hand for a higher-pitched sounds and then my fingers for fast rolls and pop sounds. At home, inanimate objects seemed to come alive with the rhythmic time. Oatmeal boxes were my favorite. My parents always thought I just loved oatmeal for breakfast—but I knew that the sooner I emptied the box, the sooner I’d have a cardboard drum. In regards to a real instrument, I really did not know what I was missing until I was given a pair of bongos as a gift at 6 years old. Wow, it was like a whole new world opened up. I was now playing on the soft animal skin that draped the frame of this wonderful percussion instrument. The sounds resonated like echoes in a canyon and I was on a wonderful journey of rhythm and sound. Several years later, while walking back to my house from a friendly neighborhood game of padless tackle football, I noticed that there were a bunch of things strewn about on my neighbor’s lawn. As I got closer I realized that those things were six different drums—metal poles, pedals and large metal disks, which I later learned were cymbals—all lying on the lawn waiting to be loaded in for what I now know was a band rehearsal. I asked myself, “How does that guy know how to put those things together. How do you actually play all those drums? I was mesmerized. It seemed impossible. Unbeknownst to me, my mom and dad would give my first drum set at age 11 and my first drum lesson at age 12. I have been in love with rhythm and the drum set ever since then.

“It’s so fucking cold I’m going to freeze.” It was mid-January and 30 degrees outside, but getting the perfect ’gram is a year-round endeavor. So Mary Gui, a 28-year-old former advertising exec turned fashion blogger and Instagram “influencer,” who goes by @layersofchicblog, was wearing a sheer black dress for an outdoor photo shoot near the Brooklyn Bridge. “The goal is to not die,” she told me as she climbed the rocks by the pier. A park enforcement patrol officer told her to get down before she hurt herself, so she complied, waited until he walked away, and then immediately climbed back up. “Let’s get one showing the bag,” she told the photographer. Then one showing her nails. Then one showing her earrings. Thirty minutes later, when she felt she had gotten every possible angle of her outfit, she changed into a pearl-studded sweater and leggings in a pop-up tent, and the whole process began again. “Once I start shooting, I stop feeling anything,” she told me between poses. “But it takes like two hours to recover from a shoot in the winter, to feel my hands.” She got the shot she wanted, though — windswept hair, Manhattan skyline perfectly framed in the background. And over a thousand people liked the resulting post. Gui is one of a rapidly growing number of striving Instagram “influencers” who populate their social media feeds with curated photos of themselves in impeccably styled outfits and the latest designer handbags. You’ll find them against a backdrop of exotic beaches in Thailand, or chic architecture in Paris and Milan, or graffitied walls in New York and Miami. Their hair is perfectly blown out, but styled to look natural; their bronzed skin is more “sun-kissed” than “tan.” They might have ab definition in their bikini photos, but never too much, and their flowy maxi dresses hit the wind in just the right way. Their artfully arranged shots of brunch dishes at five-star restaurants are taken from above the table by standing on a chair; their breakfast in bed photos in luxury hotel rooms are framed on white Egyptian cotton sheets, and their newest accessories and beauty products are displayed on marble countertops. And in the midst of each carefully edited picture of an influencer just “hanging out,” brands have found a new method of direct yet subtle marketing to young, impressionable consumers. Instagram has become flooded with posts sporting the ubiquitous #ad or #sponsored captions — language that is required by US Federal Trade Commission endorsement laws — underneath photos of a new jewelry line or eye cream. And these sponsored posts have made maintaining an Instagram feed a very lucrative job, with some high-profile influencers being paid in the range of $150,000 per post. “The industry is so saturated with people, there are influencers everywhere now — the hot girl who wants to become a bikini model, the guy who has like 19 abs,” says Mike Tommasiello (@nydoorman), a 30-year-old microinfluencer (meaning anyone with fewer than 100,000 followers). Tommasiello originally gained online attention for being a fixture in the NYC club and party scene; his Instagram handle is tattooed on his right wrist. It might seem that all you need is a well-stocked closet, a modest following, a nice camera, and some basic familiarity with photo editing in order to make a living from posting on Instagram. But as the field grows more and more crowded with would-be social media stars, the margins of the business have become tighter, and it takes more than luck or good clothes to build a sustainable career as an influencer. In interviews with BuzzFeed News, people who’ve committed themselves to becoming digital-age style icons — with Instagram followings that range from 15,000 to nearly 5,000,000 — spoke candidly about the hours they’ve spent to make it work, the ins and outs of their budgets, and whether it’s all been worth it. Gui left her six-year career in advertising in mid-2016 to pursue her fashion blog and Instagram full time. Her feed is full of vivid pinks, blues, polka dots, floral prints, and delicate clothing details like bows and tassels; she describes herself as a “modern-day Carrie Bradshaw.” Inspired by street style blogs like Aimee Song’s Song of Style, Gui started her own in 2010, posting once a month. She joined Instagram in 2013, where she now has over 50,000 followers. It generally takes Gui up to two hours to edit one photo for Instagram, and an additional hour to write her blog posts (two to three times a week), and she does photo shoots for her outfits twice a week. “I sift through 300–400 photos taken per outfit,” Gui says. She edits them on her computer first in Adobe Lightroom, and then again with a suite of popular editing and filtering apps on her phone like Snapseed and Facetune. It took six months (and around 10,000 followers) for Gui to start making any money doing sponsored posts and campaigns. “In the beginning, I was using $2,000–$3,000 of my savings per month, and was only making $50 to $100 per post,” she says. Her social media presence still doesn’t fully cover her bills and living expenses. “It’s gotten better, though,” she says. Now, she’s able to charge up to around $500 per post, an amount that continues to grow with her following. “But it’s hard because it’s not consistent. One month you get a couple of high-paying brand collaborations, and the next month, none. And you might not receive the payment until 30 days later.” Her first sponsored posts in 2016 were with smaller brands; she’s since collaborated with heavyweights like H&M and Glamour magazine. Gui worked a temp job from November 2017 to February 2018 to help bridge the gap. “Relying only on Instagram income month-to-month is difficult at my level. But I’ve never considered quitting,” she says, adding that she’s been encouraged by her steadily growing following and has no intention of ever going back to working a full-time job. Photographers are Gui’s biggest expense — her ex-boyfriend used to take her photos, and she was reluctant to spend money on photography at first, but now she hires professionals: “I realized how important it is to have a consistent look, feel, and quality of photos.” Gui buys some of the clothing and accessories featured in her photos, though she says that expense has gone down over time as more brands will send her clothes for free. Many fashion influencers still spend a lot of money on clothing and accessories, despite being gifted items by brands (for both variety in their feeds and because not all gifted clothes reflect their personal style). Igee Okafor (@igeeokafor) is a 23-year-old men’s style and lifestyle blogger with 34,000 followers who grew up in Nigeria and now lives in Manhattan’s Financial District. Okafor wears classic and often luxury menswear (think double-breasted or three-piece suits, tweed, and houndstooth), and his photos wouldn’t look out of place in GQ. He says he also has to spend a lot on transportation (to brand events) and on maintaining his website. Okafor’s mother initially gave him the money he needed to start a blog; today, he estimates he spends a little under $2,000 a month on both clothes and photography (around $4,000 total). Not all influencers think spending that much money on clothes is necessary. Blogger Aimee Song (@songofstyle) — one of the most famous influencers on Instagram, with 4.7 million followers — explains, “When I was starting out, I thrifted a lot and because I worked at two different retail stores, I got a discount.” Song, now 31, rose to prominence by joining Instagram early on, in September 2011. “You just need good style,” she says. “You can have all the money in this world and still not have personal style.” For bigger bloggers like Song, there are even more expenses involved as their social media presence grows. Take Jessica Wang (@notjessfashion; 620,000 followers). When she started her blog three years ago, Wang only worked with her husband — who is also her photographer — but now employs a team including a communications director, a content strategist, additional photographers, part-time writers, and a web developer. Wang still buys her own clothes, because she wants to have control over her looks. “Besides the obvious shopping expense, there's marketing, legal, and accounting,” she says. On top of that, she spends money on travel, equipment, and venue rentals. Her Instagram and blog were originally intended to just help generate traffic for her online clothing store, but now she says her dream is to “keep producing high-end editorial content” — for lots of brands, not just fashion — and to work with an even larger staff. But many influencers, especially microinfluencers, end up running everything by themselves. Gui says the work involved in being an influencer and blogger can feel like multiple full-time jobs at once. “You have to do every single thing related to your blog,” Gui says. “You are simultaneously stylist, model, creative director, and photo editor; you also have to plan the shoots, figure out all the logistics, handle negotiations and invoicing.” And when your business is yourself, it can turn your whole life into work. Mary follows a set posting schedule — at least once a day at noon or 9 p.m. — and plans her captions in advance in a note on her iPhone. “It’s good to leave around eight hours between posts. And I’ve found that posting before 11 a.m. isn’t good for engagement,” she says. On Saturdays she stays in and prepares all her photos for the week ahead of time. Whenever Mary posts a photo on Instagram, she first replies to all the comments on her previous posts, then sets aside the next 10 minutes to reply to new comments, and to like and comment on other people’s photos that use the same hashtags (#realoutfitgram, #prettylittleiiinspo, #romanticstyle). “If someone comments on my picture in those first 10 minutes, I make sure to reply and comment on one of their pictures in return.” Gui estimates that she spends around three to four hours on Instagram per day on average. “If I don’t need to pay attention, if I’m watching TV, I’ll be on Instagram. I’ll be on Instagram anytime I’m waiting or bored.” She says she spends her subway commutes editing photos: “You don’t have service, so it’s the perfect time.” Gui’s time is also taken up by brand events, often several a week. Alexandra (Lex) Dieck (@lexiconofstyle; 85,000 followers), a 26-year-old Mexican-American fashion blogger and designer from Austin who now lives in NYC, says she used to go to events every night, sometimes as many as four in one evening. She now carefully picks and chooses what to attend, but sometimes prefers to stay in and meet her deadlines for sponsored brand posts. But in many ways, the job is as unglamorous as any kind of self-employment. “Some days I’ll look like a slob, sit at my computer, and answer like 500 emails,” she says. “There are days where I won’t speak to anyone.” Being an influencer can be isolating in other ways as well. David Pangilinan (@davidisherenow), a 23-year-old lifestyle influencer with 216,000 followers, says that his large social media presence can sometimes put a strain on his relationships. “I don’t speak about it on dates because it can intimidate people,” he says. “My best friends know they’re going to eat their food cold by the time I’m done taking photos for all my platforms.” Instagram actually became a problem in Pangilinan’s relationship with a man he dated for a while, who had a smaller online following. “After about six months, he said, ‘Make sure to tag me in your Instagram story!’ and I broke up with him because that made me question why he was really with me. It can be hard to decipher if people like you or if they just like your following.” Pangilinan says he tries to stay close to the friends he made pre–Instagram fame, because he worries that new people just want to be friends so they can come to an event with him. “It’s sad that the numbers start to define you and define the friendship,” he says. Nathaniel James (@thenathanielmanual), a 27-year-old menswear and lifestyle blogger with 23,000 followers, says he does struggle with comparing himself to other bloggers, both men and women. “As a blogger, your brand is you. You start to build this persona of yourself, a highlight reel of your life,” he says. “Either they have more followers than me, [or] they work with ‘better’ brands, have nicer bodies, a better face, a perfect smile. It definitely started to eat away at me to a very unhealthy point where I couldn’t stand to even be around my blogger friends.” NYC-based 26-year-old fashion blogger Cassandra DiMicco (@cassdimicco; 111,000 followers) agrees. “If you’re not getting enough engagement, it can feel really personal. And also you can see exactly how well other people are doing.” “It’s sad,” DiMicco says. “Ninety percent of people care more about making money than they do about anything else.” Of course, being an influencer can be very rewarding — once you make it. An industry rule of thumb mentioned by many influencers I spoke to is that you could expect to make 1% of your following per post (someone with 10,000 followers could charge $100 for a sponsored post, for example). “But it varies,” says James Nord, founder of Fohr Card, which bills itself as the first influencer marketing platform. Fohr Card is a website that influencers use to search for brands to collaborate with (and vice versa). “I’ve seen people with 350,000 followers make $1 million a year, and I’ve seen people with the same following make $70,000 a year,” he says. But he estimates that most influencers should be able to bring in an annual total about equal to their number of followers. Mark Zablow, CEO of Cogent, an influencer marketing agency, says that microinfluencers typically could make anywhere from $500 to $2,500 per sponsored post, whereas those with between 100,000 and 500,000 followers could make between $2,500 and $5,000. But according to the 23 influencers interviewed for this story, it took on average between one and two years (and between 10,000 to 20,000 followers) before they began to receive significant monetary compensation from working with brands — and even longer to begin to cover their living expenses. In the beginning, most were typically offered around $50 to $200 per post. Some influencers impatient to speed up the process of getting established may turn to fraudulent methods of building their following, including purchasing followers, likes, and comments, and using bots — which violate Instagram’s terms of service. Instagram, like Twitter and other social media platforms, has struggled to cut down on the influx of bots on its service over recent years, despite multiple efforts to crack down on the accounts. In 2014, Instagram purged millions of accounts suspected of spam. “I want cracking down on all of that ‘bought’ stuff, people who buy verification, even loop giveaways,” says Lisa DiCicco Cahue (@lisadnyc), a fashion and lifestyle influencer with 100,000 followers who also works as a model. (Loop giveaways are a technique some influencers use to pool their followers, tagging the next person in a “loop” where giveaway participants must like every image and follow every influencer involved for a chance to win the prize.) “Some bloggers want to take the easy way out,” Cahue says. “This isn’t a get-rich-quick career.” As Myspace and Vine have made clear, social media platforms rarely last forever. So where do Instagram influencers plan to go from here? Courtney Danielle (@curlsandcouture), a 28-year-old beauty/style blogger from Staten Island with 90,000 followers, thinks every influencer should have a “retirement” plan; hers is to become an author and open her own business, like a marketing agency or hair salon. “You can only do so many beauty tutorials,” she says, laughing. “Influencing is a stepping-stone to creating a platform for yourself for something more sustainable.” Danielle is also currently studying for the MCAT to go to medical school to become a surgeon, and would eventually like to meld her social media presence and passion for medicine together somehow. For some, though, Insta-fame is the end goal. Gui wants to hit 100,000 followers and to be able to fully support herself through her Instagram. Others, inspired by early bloggers like Song who’ve utilized their platforms to achieve success in business or philanthropy, are pursuing their own capsule collections and YouTube channels. Okafor wants to build his own menswear and lifestyle brand “like Giorgio Armani” and eventually own his own store. James wants to write a book, open a restaurant, own a ceramics studio, and have his own clothing line. DiMicco wants to start a brand or website or “any sort of company.” “If you have an audience, you have free marketing for starting whatever you want,” she says, “and it’s almost stupid to not create something of your own and promote it.” “I don’t want to be one of the people who just sustains themselves on their social media for their livelihood, because what happens when one day you’re not cool anymore?” says Tommasiello. Formerly an analyst for media agencies, Tommasiello used his social media cachet to work full-time with brands and influencers at social media marketing agency Talent Resources. “The influencers who do well are the ones who really give a shit, and do successful things outside of just posting content. People want more than just good pictures.” He mentions Danielle Bernstein (@weworewhat) — a high school classmate of his who’s now a successful blogger with 1.7 million followers — as an example of an influencer who branched outside her Instagram success (by launching an overalls brand). “The key to ‘making it’ is just living your life rather than being overly concerned with your pictures. To create interesting content, you have to be interesting.” But to some extent, Tommasiello feels he has already “made it": He says he spent his childhood in Long Island on the outside looking in as the son of immigrants who grew up very poor. “I didn’t have the same cool childhood experiences my classmates did, but now I get invited to all of those things by brands — charity galas, backstage at Coachella, Art Basel — that, to me, is crazy and so unexpected.” “If it ended tomorrow — if tomorrow, social media shut down and I had no job — I would still think that this was the coolest thing that’s ever happened to me.”

Speaking at a conference two years ago, Microsoft’s CEO displayed a slide featuring the book jackets of 1984 and Brave New World. “I do believe it’s up to us to ensure that some of the more dystopian scenarios don’t come true,” Satya Nadella said. Too late. The surveillance dystopia is on the horizon, and companies like Microsoft and Amazon are helping build it. Despite their platitudes of caution and ethics, we’ve seen the consequences of Silicon Valley’s “move fast and break things” ethos. And if we don’t stop the spread of facial recognition, its latest lucrative surveillance product, we’ll soon count our most basic freedoms among the things they’ve broken. Academics have called facial recognition, the use of artificial intelligence to pick out and identify individuals from vast databases, “the most uniquely dangerous surveillance mechanism ever invented.” And with quickly spreading commercial products like FaceApp and Facebook’s Face-ID raising privacy alarm bells, it’s easy to see how quickly we’ll feed this beast once it’s unleashed. That’s why my organization Fight for the Future is launching a nationwide campaign to shine a spotlight on where facial recognition surveillance is already happening, and how people can act at the local, state, and federal levels to stop it. Company after company in Silicon Valley has been pushing furiously ahead with the development of face-scanning surveillance tools. They see money to be made selling this tech to governments, airlines, and other private businesses. Facing growing concern from the public and lawmakers, the industry has disingenuously asked for “regulation.” This is straight out of Big Tech’s lobbying playbook — asking Congress to pass laws and then swooping in to help write them. By doing so, they hope to avoid the real debate: whether facial recognition surveillance should be allowed at all. The answer is clearly no. The threat that facial recognition poses to human society and basic liberty far outweighs any potential benefits. It’s on a very short list of technologies — like nuclear and biological weapons — that are simply too dangerous to exist, and that we would have chosen not to develop had we had the foresight. Silicon Valley, however, continues to forge ahead, bidding on lucrative government contracts that are already enabling surveillance, the likes of which we’ve never seen. We are on the verge of an unprecedented increase in state and private spying that will be built in plain sight. It will be built in winsome partnership between corporations and government agencies hungry for more data and control. The rich will grow richer, unaccountable authorities will become more powerful, and the rest of us will be subject to deeply invasive monitoring every time we leave our homes. Tech lobbyists acknowledge some of the flaws in current facial recognition products, but promise they can be fixed or addressed with industry-friendly regulation. But even if these algorithms worked perfectly, ubiquitous face scanning still poses an enormous threat to the future of human freedom. Biometric surveillance powered by artificial intelligence is categorically different than any surveillance we have seen before. It enables real-time location tracking and behavior policing of an entire population at a previously impossible scale. Consider Slate’s reporting on the algorithms that review security camera footage. They look for “triggers,” which could include “complex and nuanced emotional and cognitive states” registered by your expressions. As ominous as it is to imagine a person you’ve never met watching your every move — comparing you to mugshots and anticipating whether you’ll commit a crime — imagine instead software working at top speed and incapable of empathizing with you. It thinks it knows how you feel and what you intend. It doesn’t care if you’ve had a bad day. That look on your face could peg you as an enemy of the state. Any one of us could become the victim of an algorithm’s cold testimony. There is no amount of regulation, transparency, or oversight that will fix the dangers inherent in widespread face surveillance. Only a full ban — a federal ban, covering the use of facial recognition by government agencies, in public places, and in public contracts with private entities — can prevent our nightmares from becoming reality. As terrifying as a vision of accurate surveillance technology is, the technology’s current shortcomings are scary enough. Facial recognition algorithms systematically misidentify people of color and women as criminals, automating existing forms of discrimination and profiling. The sheer pace and scale at which such targeting can soon occur will lead to increased police harassment and false arrests, filling our prisons even faster, with centuries of racism built into the software. Just last weekend, we learned that immigration authorities were scouring state databases of driver’s licenses, scanning millions of Americans’ faces without any consent in an attempt to locate and deport undocumented immigrants. In some cases, they targeted undocumented people who had legally obtained drivers licenses in states where they are allowed to do so, a devastating bait and switch. The good news is that, while facial recognition is spreading at an alarming pace, momentum against it is growing. San Francisco, Oakland, and Somerville, Massachusetts, recently became the first cities in the country to ban the technology. Berkeley is also considering a ban, and bills to halt current use of the tech are before the Massachusetts and Michigan legislatures. In Congress, there is growing bipartisan agreement to address the issue, but it could easily stall under pressure from law enforcement and Big Tech. There is no time to waste. Authoritarian surveillance programs are always used to target the most vulnerable and marginalized, and facial recognition enables the automation of oppression.