

TIME

JUST SINGIN'

THE TRUMP REBOOT

By BRIAN BENNETT

WHAT WE CAN ALL LEARN FROM THIS

By JON MEACHAM

BARR'S NEXT MOVE

By TESSA BERENSON





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▲ **President Donald
Trump arrives
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Senators on
March 26, flanked
by majority leader
Mitch McConnell
of Kentucky, left,
and Roy Blunt of
Missouri**

Photograph
by Andrew
Harnik—AP

ON THE COVER:
Illustration by
Tim O'Brien
for TIME

BAGS WITH A MISSION FOR WOMEN ON A MISSION



FEED Founder, Lauren Bush Lauren,
carrying the **Leather FEED 1 Bag**,
which provides **185 school meals**.

FEED
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Conversation



WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT...

THE PHENOM After reading Charlotte Alter's April 1 profile of Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, readers were split on whether the headline-grabbing New York Democrat would help or hinder her party's future success. Kathleen Butler of Wichita, Kans., worried she would cost Democrats the presidency in 2020 by being "an example of how too far left our party has gone," and Mara Fellouris of San Francisco argued that AOC's celebrity left her out of touch with voters. Others, however, found hope in a new face in Congress. Max B. Heppner of Hillsboro Beach, Fla., said he "salutes" her as a young person bringing energy to D.C., while Douglas McGaw of Emporia, Kans., hailed her vision of a Green New Deal as offering a way forward on an issue that has left him "frustrated for nearly 50 years."

QUEEN OF COMEDY Molly Ball's March 11 cover story about Julia Louis-Dreyfus drew praise from readers like Sherrill Durbin of Mounds, Okla., who called the actor "pure genius." But screenwriter Tracy Oliver's accompanying list of the funniest movies missed some reader favorites, such as *Airplane!* (Edmond Melkomian of Columbia, S.C.),

Blazing Saddles (Nancy Stier of New York City) and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* (Mike Phillips of Orangevale, Calif.). Bill Jordan of Mobile, Ala., argued that it was a mistake not to include more classics on such a list. Most humor is "timeless," he wrote. "Funny is funny."

'What a wonderful respite from the horrors of our political situation.'

JOYCE TORREY,
Canadensis, Pa.

'Thrilled with the likes of AOC and her new class. Give it all you've got!'

JAMES QUIGLEY,
Laguna Woods,
Calif.

CANDID CANDIDATE

On TIME.com, meet Pauline Ngarmpring, the first transgender candidate for Prime Minister of Thailand. Final results in the recent elections—Thailand's first since a 2014 coup—are not expected for weeks, and Ngarmpring was never a favorite. But as her country faces an identity crisis, she sees room for someone like herself to get involved. "If you love yourself," she says, "the only thing you want to do is go out, smile at people, do good things for them, encourage them, inspire them." See the story, with photos by James Nachtwey, at time.com/thailand-candidate



CAPTAIN PLANET This week's profile of British broadcaster David Attenborough (page 42) comes just before the debut of his new documentary, *Our Planet*, which premieres on April 5 on Netflix. On TIME.com, in an exclusive clip from the film, see an iceberg the size of a skyscraper break away from a glacier in Greenland, generating a tidal wave and sending 75 million tons of ice into the ocean in just 20 minutes. Watch at time.com/our-planet



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SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ▶ In Time Off (April 1), a review of the movie *Hotel Mumbai* misstated the nationality of the character Zahra. She is Iranian British.

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For the Record

'Take my golden cage and give me the sky.'

REEM,

a Saudi Arabian woman known by a pseudonym for her safety, after she and her sister were granted emergency visas; they had spent months in legal limbo after fleeing what they called "slavelike" conditions in their wealthy homeland with its laws restricting women's freedom

'Only one medium-size torso can be made ready by Friday.'

NASA, announcing that the first all-female spacewalk, planned for March 29, would not take place because there were not enough space-suit tops available in the size both astronauts wear

1,600

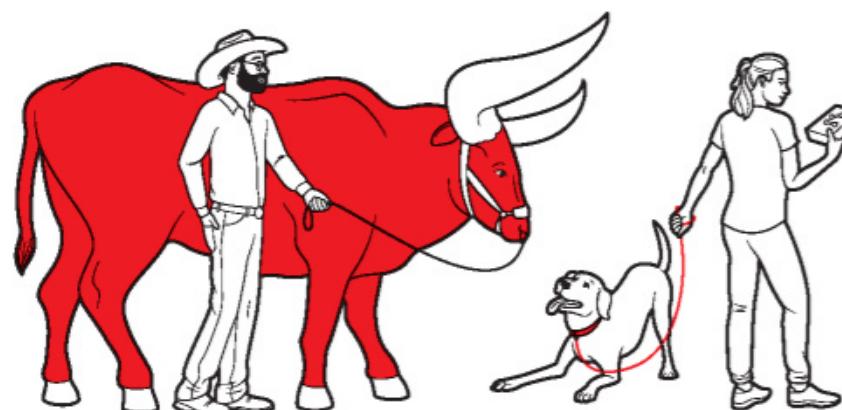
Approximate weight, in pounds, of an African Watusi steer named Oliver, brought by his owner to a Petco in Texas to test the store's policy welcoming pets on leashes (Oliver was welcomed)

'YOU HAVE TO DO MORE AND TALK LESS.'

PETER TABICHI, science teacher, on his classroom philosophy; a Franciscan friar working at a rural Kenyan school, he won the Varkey Foundation's \$1 million 2019 Global Teacher Prize on March 24

'This is a whitewash of justice.'

RAHM EMANUEL, Chicago mayor, blasting prosecutors for dropping all charges against *Empire* star Jussie Smollett a few weeks after a grand jury had indicted him on 16 felony counts; Smollett, who maintains his innocence, was accused of lying about being the victim of a hate crime



'I don't think anyone on board has signed up for this mystery travel lottery.'

SON TRAN, passenger on a March 25 British Airways flight from London to Düsseldorf, Germany, that mistakenly landed in Edinburgh



94 years and 172 days

Jimmy Carter's age as of March 22, when he set a new record for oldest living U.S. President ever

Guac

Listeria worries prompt a recall of avocados sold in at least six U.S. states



Chips

Apple's AirPods earphones get a new chip that makes wireless connection faster

The Brief

NO WAY OUT
E.U. supporters
rally 'round the
flag at a London
protest on
March 23



INSIDE

LIBERIANS LIVING IN THE U.S.
FACE A DEPORTATION DEADLINE

THE PENTAGON TAKES A RISK
FUNDING A BORDER WALL

MUSEUMS REFUSE FUNDS
LINKED TO THE OPIOID CRISIS

PHOTOGRAPH BY KEVIN COOMBS

The Brief Opener

WORLD

Cornered by Brexit, May promises to go

By Billy Perrigo/London

FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF A NEWS HELICOPTER, the hundreds of thousands of people who lined the streets of Central London on March 23 looked like a colony of ants. The thick column stretched from Hyde Park in the west past the Ritz Hotel before spilling out in front of the Houses of Parliament. Broadcast on loudspeakers and carried aloft on placards came the marchers' demand: "Put it to the people."

What else could "it" be but Brexit? Nearly three years after the June 2016 referendum in which 52% of voters elected to leave the European Union, the country is both divided and paralyzed by the decision. And on March 27, after two defeats from lawmakers who refused to ratify the exit deal she negotiated with the E.U., Prime Minister Theresa May made one last attempt to end that paralysis by promising to resign if Parliament would just push her deal over the line.

As the original March 29 deadline for Britain's departure approached, patience wore thin on all sides. An online petition calling for Brexit to be canceled altogether drew more than 5.8 million signatures, after causing the government's official petitions website to crash at least twice. At the same time as the march in London, roughly 100 miles north, Brexit supporters gathered to hear Nigel Farage, a figurehead of the movement to leave the E.U., criticize May's "Brexit betrayal." Although a much smaller crowd, the 200 or so marchers claimed to represent the 17.4 million who voted for Brexit.

May staked her reputation on delivering Brexit, but she's been unable to count on the support of even people who want to leave, let alone those who don't. According to pollster Opinium, 61% of Brits disapprove of her handling of Brexit. "I know there is a desire for a new approach and new leadership," she told members of her ruling Conservative Party on March 27. "I won't stand in the way of that."

FIRST COMES the still-tricky task of delivering Brexit. On March 14, still with no consensus on moving forward with May's deal, lawmakers voted to direct her to ask the E.U. for more time. Days later, at a summit in Brussels, leaders of the 27 other E.U. member states agreed to set a new deadline. Now, if lawmakers ratify May's agreement with the E.U., Brexit will be postponed until May 22—and May will stand down. If they do not agree on a way forward, Britain is set to crash out of the bloc just two weeks after

the original date, on April 12.

Assailed by protesters on one side and the E.U. on the other, May had long ago lost the support of many of her colleagues. At least 29 members of her government have resigned to vote against her Brexit policy since June 2017, and her Cabinet, delicately balanced between Remainers and Brexiteers, is beset by regular leaks and open disagreement. May narrowly headed off an attempt to topple her premiership on March 24, according to reports, and her authority was torn to shreds two days later when lawmakers proposed 16 possible ways forward for the U.K., in defiance of her deal.

If Britain ends up with a so-called no-deal Brexit on April 12, trade agreements, citizens' rights and customs arrangements could be nullified overnight. Authorities are preparing for possible food and medicine shortages, and the Bank of England has warned it could do more harm to the U.K. economy than the 2008 financial crisis.

A no-deal Brexit would have repercussions overseas too. Trade with every E.U. country would fall, with Germany and Ireland among the worst hit. The U.S. could also suffer: a recession in Britain, the U.S.'s fifth largest export market, would have knock-on effects for U.S. producers. The potential damage to the global clout of a country once seen as America's diplomatic bridge to Europe is substantial.

There is, however, a mechanism to avoid a no-deal Brexit: revoking Article 50, the legal device by which Britain is exiting the E.U. "That's the nuclear option," says Tim Bale, a professor of politics at Queen Mary, University of London. "It would mean not leaving at all." Europe's top court has ruled that the U.K. could cancel Brexit unilaterally, an outcome that would delight the millions who signed the anti-Brexit petition.

But it remains a remote possibility. Responding to the petition in a statement, the government said revoking Article 50 would "break the promises made by government to the British people, disrespect the clear instruction from a democratic vote and, in turn, reduce confidence in our democracy." And May has repeatedly said she "will not countenance" canceling Brexit.

It may not be her decision for much longer. Waiting in the wings for her job are former Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and former Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab, both of whom would push for a no-deal Brexit over a cancellation, going against the wishes of a majority of lawmakers. "I'm afraid this saga will continue," David Lammy, a lawmaker from the opposition Labour Party, tells TIME. "There's a lot of drama ahead on the British political scene." The passing of May's deal, after two historic defeats, would be less a sign of her skill negotiating tactics than of her running down the clock. For now, the resignation of this Prime Minister might be the one thing on which a large majority in the U.K. can agree. □

I know there is a desire for a new approach and new leadership.'

THERESA MAY,
in a March 27 speech to
Conservative lawmakers





POPPYPALOOZA When bright blossoms popped up across Walker Canyon's hills in early March, the residents of Lake Elsinore, Calif., were excited. Wildflower "superblooms" typically happen once a decade, and drought has made them scarcer. But tourists, spurred by social media, quickly overwhelmed locals and flowers alike. After temporarily blocking access, the town introduced shuttles and limited parking—measures that appear not to have dampened interest, as up to 20,000 people visited on March 23 alone.

THE BULLETIN

Deportation looms for Liberians after decades of protected status in the U.S.

MANY LIBERIANS LIVING IN THE U.S. ARRIVED fleeing civil war and its aftermath. On March 31, the Trump Administration's decision to end a special program designed to protect them goes into effect. It will send some 4,000 people, many of whom have spent most of their lives in the U.S., back to a country they may no longer know.

SPECIAL STATUS In 1991, with fighting rendering their homeland chaotic, Liberians in the U.S. at the time were granted protected status, giving them the right to stay and work (but no path to citizenship) until it was safe to go back. Eight years later, after one civil war had morphed into another, President Bill Clinton gave Liberians another special status, called Deferred Enforced Departure (DED), which offers similar protection from deportation.

TIME TO GO For two decades, every President renewed the program—until March 2018, when President Donald Trump reconsidered it amid a wider curbing of programs for previously protected immigrants

from Honduras, El Salvador, Haiti, Nepal and Sudan. Noting that Liberia was no longer experiencing armed conflict and that the threat of another Ebola outbreak had dissipated, he gave Liberians with DED status—everyone from doctoral students to retirees with deep roots in the U.S.—one year “to make necessary arrangements” to return.

BREAKING HOMES Many parents are facing a painful choice: leave their U.S.-born children, or take them from the only home they have ever known to an unfamiliar country where violence is rife and opportunities are few. And those with DED status who might choose to stay and appeal the decision risk losing their jobs and being deported as newly undocumented immigrants. Civil rights advocates have sued the Administration on behalf of the Liberians, calling the program's termination racially motivated. Meanwhile, congressional Democrats have introduced a law that would allow Liberians in the DED to apply for permanent residency—but even if the law passes, it will likely be too late. —ARYN BAKER

NEWS TICKER

Trump muddles NoKo sanctions

President Donald Trump's March 22 tweet that he'd withdraw sanctions on North Korea drew confusion, as he seemed to refer to **sanctions that had just been announced**. Officials said he meant future sanctions, but Bloomberg reported March 26 that this was a cover story to hide that Trump had been persuaded to change his mind after tweeting.

Mexico wants apology for conquest

Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said March 25 that he'd sent a letter to Spain's King Felipe VI **demanding an apology for human-rights abuses against indigenous people during Spain's 16th century conquest** of Latin America. Spain said it “firmly rejects” the letter's argument.

More tragedy for shooting survivors

In just over a week, two survivors of 2018's shooting in Parkland, Fla., and a father of a child killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting all **died by apparent suicide**, police said, prompting calls for support and reform. If you or someone you know may be contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

NEWS TICKER

Trump Admin backs full ACA repeal

The U.S. Justice Department said in a March 25 legal filing that it believes the Affordable Care Act should be overturned, which would **eliminate health coverage for more than 20 million people** and disrupt the U.S. health system. The Administration previously said only parts of the law should be struck down.

Europe's copyright law transformed

The European Parliament backed **controversial reforms to E.U. copyright laws** on March 26, including one that could compel platforms like Instagram and YouTube to filter uploads of copyrighted material. Supporters say the changes protect creators; others saw a "massive blow" to Internet freedoms.

Israel and Gaza exchange fire

Seven people were **injured on March 25 after a rocket fired from Gaza hit a house near Tel Aviv**. Israel launched retaliatory airstrikes targeting Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza. The clash prompted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to cut short a visit to the U.S.

GOOD QUESTION

How is the Pentagon using military funding to build a border wall?

THE PENTAGON COULD FACE LONG-TERM negative effects by defying Congress to fund construction for a wall along the Mexican border, but acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan is going ahead with it anyway.

On March 25, he authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to spend up to \$1 billion for 57 miles of fencing, roads and other measures on the southwestern border. And rather than asking for the money, the Defense Department simply told Congress what it was doing. That's an unprecedented tactic and one that has drawn fire from Democrats and Republicans alike who see it as sidestepping the legislature's power of the purse.

The decision to do things this way will likely cost the Pentagon its ability to "re-program" money in the years ahead, which will hamper its ability to react quickly to military needs. "We understand the significant downsides of losing what amounts to a privilege," Shanahan told the House Armed Services Committee on March 26. But, he added, the Pentagon was simply executing a "legal order from the Commander in Chief," President Donald Trump, who declared a national emergency at the border in February.

To obtain the border funding, Pentagon officials played what amounts to a bureaucratic shell game. The Defense Department took leftover money that was allocated for

military personnel and transferred it into a counterdrug account, which gives it authority to take measures to support federal law-enforcement efforts to stop drug trafficking. The fence falls under that umbrella.

Trump's decision to declare a national emergency was widely seen as a last-ditch "nuclear option" that will likely spark multiple legal challenges and fundamentally shake the balance of federal power. But an initial attempt to overturn the emergency flopped on March 26, as House Democrats failed to overturn Trump's veto of a resolution rejecting it.

Though Representative Adam Smith, chair of the House Armed Services Committee, issued a letter denying the Pentagon request to transfer funding, it was symbolic, as no such request had been made. To see the defense budget as a "slush fund" from which money can be grabbed as needed "really undermines [its] credibility," Smith told Shanahan.

And the Pentagon still intends to take an additional \$3.6 billion in construction funds that have not yet been allocated to a specific contract. The military generally uses that money to fund projects ranging from family housing to infrastructure repair, and members of both parties have lambasted the plan out of fears that projects in their home states will be targeted. "Military construction on the border will not come at the expense of our people, our readiness or our modernization," Shanahan promised—but with the Pentagon now deeply involved in implementing Trump's immigration policy, such construction will increasingly be part of any defense spending calculation. —W.J. HENNIGAN

LEANCHOILIA: ROBERT R. GAINES; GUGGENHEIM: THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; WALKER: GEMS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

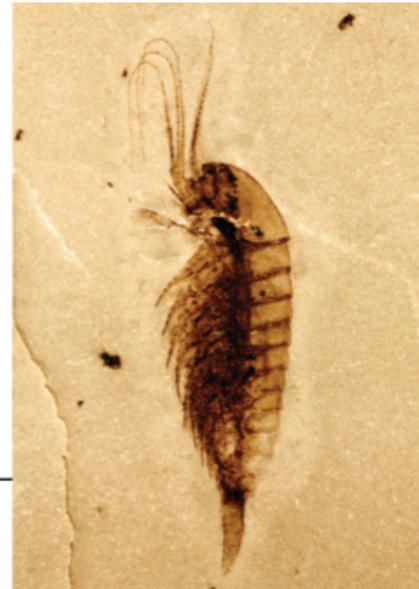
ARCHAEOLOGY

Blast from the past

A mudslide 518 million years ago left a huge deposit of fossils in China's Hubei province, scientists have announced. Here, a few of the 101 species identified so far. —Ciara Nugent

LEANCHOILIID

Researchers found a shrimplike creature, part of a group called the Leanchoiliids first identified in Canada's Burgess Shale. The new fossil, showing fine anatomical details, may belong to a new species.



KINORHYNCH

A bristly, wormlike animal measuring up to 1.5 in. appears to be a precursor to the much smaller kinorhynch, also known as a mud dragon, which today dwells on coasts and in shallow seas.

DAIHUA SANQIONG

A circular sea creature with 18 tentacles may be an ancestor of modern comb jellies. Scientists have until now struggled to trace the comb jelly's origin because soft-bodied organisms are rarely fossilized.

Milestones

DIED

Rafi Eitan, Israeli spy who led the capture of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, on March 23 at 92.

OUTLAWED

The **Christchurch shooter's manifesto**, by New Zealand, on March 23. In an effort to limit hate, the country made it a crime to possess or distribute the document.

RECOGNIZED

The **Golan Heights** as part of Israel, by President Donald Trump, on March 25, breaking with U.S. precedent and many other countries that consider the area occupied territory.

BANNED

Praise for **white nationalism and white separatism on Facebook**, on March 27, in a major policy change by the platform that will take effect in April.

RETired

Ultimate Fighting Championship star **Conor McGregor**, according to McGregor, on March 26, the same day it was revealed Irish police are investigating him for sexual assault.

CHARGED

Michael Avenatti, lawyer known for representing Stormy Daniels, with trying to extort millions of dollars from Nike, on March 25. Avenatti denies the charges.

PLANNED

The **end of its Mediterranean sea patrols to rescue migrants**, in September, according to the E.U., on March 27. Air rescues will continue.



Photographer Nan Goldin leads a protest on Feb. 9 at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City against its funding by the Sackler family

REJECTED

Sackler family philanthropy Museums cut long-standing ties

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS BEGAN ON MARCH 19 WITH THE U.K.'S National Portrait Gallery and then the Tate museum group. New York City's Guggenheim Museum followed suit. Each statement expressed the same decision: to no longer accept donations worth millions of dollars from the Sackler family. On March 25, pre-empting more rejections, a Sackler Trust spokesperson announced a halt to any further donations on behalf of the family.

The news was a win for activists who say Sackler money is tainted by the family's ties to the U.S. opioid crisis, which the CDC has linked to nearly 49,000 deaths in 2017 alone. Sackler family members own Purdue Pharma, the company behind the painkiller OxyContin. A recent lawsuit representing over 500 cities, counties and tribes accuses Purdue and eight members of the family, who deny wrongdoing, of misleading the public about the drug and profiting from the crisis; on March 26, Purdue agreed to pay Oklahoma \$270 million to settle a separate but similar case.

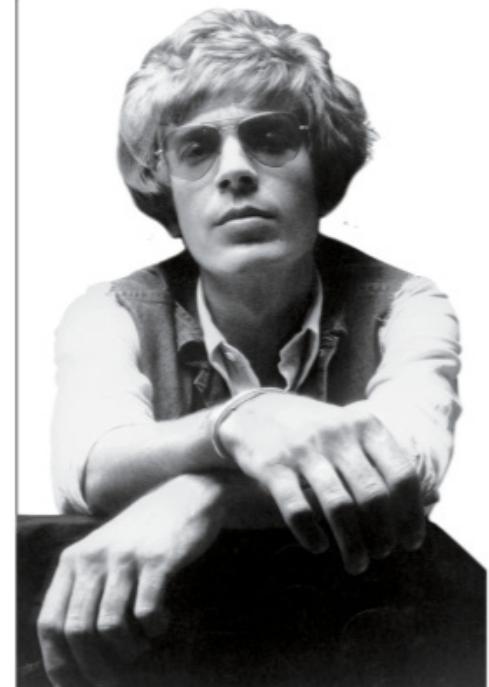
In the past two decades, the Sackler Trust has given tens of millions of dollars in donations to organizations in the U.K. and the U.S. The family name can be found branded across museums, galleries, universities and cultural institutions spanning Europe and the U.S., including the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Even if donations stop flowing, that name is likely to linger. —SUYIN HAYNES

DIED

Scott Walker
Pop prophet

SCOTT WALKER BEGAN HIS music career at the top of the charts and ended it on the fringes after decades spent pushing the boundaries of songwriting. Such uncompromising work made Walker, who died on March 22 at 76, a hero to pop titans from David Bowie to Radiohead.

At about the time the Beatles were invading America, the Ohio native (born Noel Scott Engel) assumed a pseudonym, moved to London and found fame fronting the Walker Brothers, a pop trio whose lush hits like "Make It Easy on Yourself" were built around his baritone. But he soon outgrew teen idol-dom. In the decades that followed, he composed haunting scores for films like 2018's *Vox Lux* and constructed harrowing experimental suites influenced by history. Yet his difficult later releases were never an exercise in elitism. "I'm writing for everyone. Just they haven't discovered it yet," Walker told the *Guardian*. "I'll be six feet under—but they will." —JUDY BERMAN



The Brief TIME with ...

Catherine O'Hara isn't an outrageous diva—she just plays one on TV

By Judy Berman

"HOW WOULD YOU BEHAVE IF YOUR WHOLE LIFE was ripped out from under you?" Catherine O'Hara wants to know. I'm supposed to be asking the questions here, at the Manhattan hotel restaurant where the comedy legend is between appointments, cobbling together a late lunch of tapas (and urging me to try the stuffed peppadews). But I've just thoughtlessly referred to her character on *Schitt's Creek* as selfish, and she's politely defending the woman she's spent the past four years portraying.

O'Hara has a point. Her alter ego Moira Rose is more gracious than many would be in her four-figure shoes. A sweet yet sharp Canadian family sitcom that will end its fifth season in the U.S. on Pop TV on April 9, *Schitt's Creek* follows the megarich Rose clan—Moira, her husband Johnny (O'Hara's frequent co-star Eugene Levy) and their grown kids David (Eugene's son and co-creator Dan Levy) and Alexis (Annie Murphy)—after they lose their fortune and move into a motel in the titular podunk town, which they somehow own. It's an unlikely scenario but one orchestrated to bring the Roses together. For 65-year-old O'Hara, who has two sons in their 20s with her husband, production designer and director Bo Welch, this forced togetherness is kind of enviable: "I'm always wondering where my kids are," she laughs.

O'Hara rocketed to the pop-cultural stratosphere in the late 1980s and early '90s through roles as a harried mother in *Home Alone* and Winona Ryder's artiste stepmom in *Beetlejuice* (where she met Welch). Like Moira, she is an actor, wife and mom. But their personalities couldn't differ more. Moira, a former soap star whose pretensions outstrip her talent, can be vain, competitive, histrionic and snobby, whereas O'Hara is warm, self-deprecating and animated without being effusive. She seems happier carrying on a reciprocal conversation than talking about herself. And while Moira looks larger than life in six-inch heels, pastel wigs and designer outfits that walk the line between gorgeous and garish, O'Hara—a compact woman in a crisp, white button-down and thick-rimmed glasses—could be a stylish humanities professor.

Still, as O'Hara points out, her character is a trouper and an optimist, always seeking to revive her acting career and restore the family to its former glory. "She thinks that she's really making the best of a bad situation," O'Hara says. This season, in a moment of growth, Moira returns the too-expensive

O'HARA QUICK FACTS

Grandes dames

On *SCTV*, her repertoire of impressions included Katharine Hepburn, Meryl Streep and Lucille Ball.

Nightmarish reunions

She has reprised her role in Tim Burton's 1993 animated classic *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in several live performances.

Pride of Canada

In 2018, O'Hara was appointed to the Order of Canada. She has also appeared on postage stamps in her home country.

gown she'd bought for the premiere of her comeback, *The Crows Have Eyes III: The Crowening*, a trashy sci-fi flick in which she is hysterical in both senses of the word. The Roses may seem hard to relate to, but as showrunner, Dan Levy endows them with heart, pluck and a capacity for change.

It's this gentleness—and not, as one might expect, a kind of schadenfreude in watching the 1% struggle—that has made the show a sleeper hit stateside, where its availability on Netflix has attracted an enthusiastic young audience. And while it's stretched O'Hara—she had never spent so much time playing a single role before—it has also brought her back to a type of character with which she's intimately familiar. Moira, like many of her previous roles, is a performer—a ham who craves attention and approval. It's the gulf between the way she comes off and the way she tries to present herself that makes her so funny. Yet O'Hara appears to be untouched by such self-delusion. "Maybe I'm just trying to get it out of my system," she suggests. "I'm so afraid to be like that."

ALL GOOD ACTING requires an instinctive grasp of psychology, but the insight and empathy that ground O'Hara's oddball characters are specific to her work. That's probably because she's spent so much time over the past 45 years creating them. Though her most familiar roles have been in major films, she's devoted much of her career to projects rooted in the collaborative discipline of improv. "I've never, for a second, been drawn to the idea of doing a one-woman show," she says. "Because it's so inspiring to work with good, talented people."

O'Hara credits that preference to growing up in a big, funny Toronto family whose members were always performing for one another. She became the baby of Toronto's new Second City outpost in 1974, understudying for her brother Marcus' then girlfriend Gilda Radner—whom O'Hara adored—and overlapping with Dan Aykroyd, John Candy and Andrea Martin as well as Eugene Levy. (The two even dated briefly.) Improv comedy was still a relatively new form then, and they were essentially working out how to do it in real time. O'Hara grins when I mention that the manic creativity of those years reminds me of an underground music scene. In an improv troupe, "you are creating your own material like a band," she agrees. "It's so musical."

By 1976, O'Hara, Levy and many of their cohorts had been drafted into the original cast of *SCTV*, Second City Toronto's answer to *Saturday Night Live*. In the ensuing decades, she balanced character roles in big Hollywood movies with membership in a new troupe: the ad hoc ensemble of improvisers who populate the indie mockumentaries of *Best in Show* director Christopher Guest. It was only in those films that she and Levy started working as partners,



often playing couples. O'Hara recalls that her family was moved to tears watching the old friends play troubled duo Mitch & Mickey in the 2003 folk send-up *A Mighty Wind*.

Throughout her career, she has cherished the freedom that improv has given her to shape her own outsize yet remarkably human characters through collaboration and research. But O'Hara appears to have mastered the portrayal of fragile entertainers, from SCTV showgirl Lola Heatherton to Moira, through keen observation. Days before the midwinter afternoon when we met, she and Levy presented at the Critics' Choice Awards—where *Schitt's Creek* made history as the first Canadian show nominated for best comedy—with a gag that had them hyping their own banter like a movie trailer. (“If you see just one couple present an award this year,” she belied, “make it this one.”)

They killed on Twitter. But in the room, O'Hara sensed more tension than mirth. “I’m not saying they should have been laughing, but I saw a lot of faces whose mind-sets were somewhere else,” she

**T've never,
for a
second,
been
drawn to
the idea
of doing
a one-
woman
show.'**

CATHERINE
O'HARA, on her
preference for
collaboration

says now. O'Hara can, of course, get into the heads of her nervous peers: “These people have been told they’re going to win. This is their time.” But this need for recognition, surely not the chief motivating force for many of these creators, can distract from the intrinsic rewards of having made a great show.

O'Hara has similar reservations about social media; she doesn’t do Twitter, shudders at its appropriation of the term *followers* and laments the urge to share photos of every meal. On *Schitt’s Creek*, which will end its run following a sixth season in 2020, characters’ lives revolve around the town square rather than Instagram. That jibes with O'Hara’s values. “It’s a nice example of how we should behave in this real world,” she says.

And yet, for a comedic actor who excels at playing the obviously vain, the narcissism of the Internet—and, arguably, of the era—is part of what keeps her in business. Not that she’d ever say she’s immune to it: “I love the idea that human beings—including me, right now and always—think they can control the impression they make.” □



A battle won

Members of the Syrian Democratic Forces prepare for a ceremony marking the “100% territorial defeat” of ISIS, at the al-Omar oil-field base in eastern Syria on March 23. In declaring that day that it had extinguished the extremists’ last Syrian stronghold, the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led force noted that it had lost 11,000 fighters battling the militant group. And though ISIS no longer holds territory in either Iraq or Syria—places where its caliphate once ruled more than 7 million people—analysts remain wary of sleeper cells. The group’s shadowy leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, also remains at large.

Photograph by Chris McGrath—Getty Images
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The View

SPORTS

WHAT PLAYERS DESERVE

By Taylor Branch

The annual March Madness heist is under way. Let's take a peek behind the curtain: while the cameras show supremely gifted college athletes delivering drama and thrills on the court, the NCAA has licensed every television broadcast to hoard a bonanza for people who never touch the ball. ¶ Well-meaning voices call for the NCAA to pay players, but this demand is misguided. ►

The View Opener

No college should be required to pay athletes, and no pay structure needs to be planned. The central question is whether college athletes should have the bargaining rights that other Americans take for granted. On this point, the NCAA is deaf to persuasion. It will hang on to its windfall tenaciously.

The NCAA system is not a creation of law. It's a private compact of colleges and their athletic conferences, designed to impose a compensation ceiling on athletes by fiat and to demonize anyone who pays or receives a nickel above essentially the cost of college attendance.

Basic reform is simple: just recognize the right of each athlete to bargain for the value of his or her work. This is not a radical notion. Roughly 14 million of 20 million U.S. undergraduates have jobs outside the classroom, and no one thinks to regulate or confiscate those earnings. Only the players in commercialized college sports are victimized as cash cows, to the tune of several billion dollars per year.

A fair, free-market college sports industry would evolve on its own once athletes have their rights restored. Some revenue would be diverted to those players as the essential core talent, which is only fair. What's amazing is how long we've allowed them to be robbed.

Such a system would favor the same 60 to 100 schools that are dominant already. The major conferences

may adopt differing, nonmonopoly standards for their athletic budgets, but the vast majority of athletes would not be affected. A volleyball player at a small college could seek compensation like anyone else, but negligible revenue would make such a request moot. Most college sports could remain amateur in the only true sense of the word, being pursued for love of the game and voluntarily divorced from commerce.

BUT WHILE THE solution may be simple, it won't be easy. The NCAA constitution blocks athletes from membership while professing devotion to their welfare,

and NCAA officials resist the danger of granting college athletes even "limited" rights. Under pressure, they have stuck to the claim of exclusive authority. Small benefits called reform, such as a "full scholarship package"—which includes free tuition and a stipend—shrewdly fall short of rights or independent representation for the athletes.

External forces will be needed to compel significant change, and there is precedent on several fronts. In 1978, spurred by Cold War competition over Olympic medals, Congress passed the Amateur Sports Act to empower active athletes by requiring they have at least 20% representation on each governing committee for U.S. Olympic teams. This small but revolutionary step soon dissolved draconian "amateur" rules

vanished overnight when the Supreme Court upheld a demand from the major football colleges, led by Georgia and Oklahoma, to schedule their own unlimited broadcasts. In the late 1990s, when an NCAA rule restricted certain new assistant coaches to a \$16,000 annual salary, some 2,000 assistants banded to file an antitrust grievance that won them the freedom to bargain, plus a \$54.5 million settlement. NCAA colleges promptly found ways to pay assistant coaches many times the old limit.

Judges have acknowledged the same legal reasoning in recent cases brought by current and former college athletes. U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken recently ruled the NCAA compact a violation of antitrust law because it captures "extraordinary revenues" for member schools by confining players to compensation "not commensurate with the value that they create." This is a restrained understatement, and courts have not yet granted athletes anything like the direct relief awarded to big football schools and the assistant coaches.

So far, the judiciary seems unwilling to confront the NCAA's self-serving bromide that economic rights for college athletes would diminish their educational experience. In truth, compensation would give players an incentive to stay in school—and standing to bargain for better academic

life. Beyond that, it remains up to the colleges whether they treat prime athletes as legitimate students.

Universities should be a forum for clarity about whether commercialized sports can coexist with academic integrity, but such debate rarely takes place at the institutions born for fearless thought. My alma mater, the University of North Carolina, temporarily canceled a pioneering course on NCAA history as too controversial. Sadly, most professors never examine the conflicted juggernaut right there on campus.

The burden of change may thus fall on athletes. Some have already begun



The NCAA estimated it would take in over \$800 million in revenue for the broadcast and licensing rights to this year's March Madness

that had enriched the AAU, then the NCAA's biggest rival. Defying hysterical predictions, the compensation since negotiated by Olympic athletes has hardly destroyed worldwide audiences for the Games. A similar law requiring representation for college athletes could be effective, and deserves consideration, but Congress has shown no interest in bucking the college sports establishment.

The courts are another venue for justice. Several times they have struck down the NCAA system as an illegal restraint of trade. Until 1984, the NCAA asserted a sole power to license each college football broadcast. That power

raising their voices. A recent strike by the football team saw the University of Missouri's president resign quickly, and the University of Maryland dismissed its football coach after players spoke out against him following a teammate's death in practice. Even symbolic gestures in defiance of NCAA rules, such as wearing an armband or a small patch discreetly labeled something like "RFA" (Rights for Athletes), or selling autographs for charity at a public ceremony, could provoke spasms of attention that sports broadcasts zealously avoid. Truly concerted action could topple the NCAA.

I AM CHEERING for UNC in March Madness as always, and I don't expect to hear a word about equity for the players. Armchair experts and well-paid commentators will continue to obsess about bracketology, upsets, momentum and a key player's sore ankle. This is natural, because sports are a designated world where fans escape to cheer and boo as they please. Intrusions from real life can break the spell, provoking resentful cries for pampered athletes to shut up and play.

Sports-think gives fans a presumptive stake to say how college sports should be run, oblivious that the whole NCAA production rests on players who have no voice at all. Athletes become urgently important for moments on the screen, but we force their fundamental rights to fit our entertainment and convenience. Surely this perspective is backward. College athletes are young adults who love a sport they have played all their lives. Some don't realize how badly they have been used until they are leaving school, which helps perpetuate the exploitation.

Sparks of courage are needed. Fans, being also citizens, should engage the larger arena of fairness. Nonfans should stop wishing for commercial sports to vanish, as though Plato might rescue the academy, and address sports corruption and dishonesty at the heart of our vital universities. My hope for March Madness, now and in the future, is some small sign of agitation over basic rights. Regardless, I'll chant, "Go Heels!" for Carolina and keep pushing for those armbands.

Branch, a Pulitzer Prize winner, is the author most recently of *The King Years: Historic Moments in the Civil Rights Movement*

THE RISK REPORT

Israel plays a strong hand

By Ian Bremmer



ISRAEL'S PRIME Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived at the White House on March 25 to stand shoulder to shoulder with President Trump, a friend and ally doing his best to help him win re-election this month. Bibi needs the boost. He faces both corruption charges and a strong challenge from an opposition alliance led by his former army chief.

Netanyahu's fortunes were vastly improved by the change in leadership in the White House. Relations with Barack Obama were famously frosty, not just because the two men were temperamentally incompatible, but because Netanyahu believed Obama's approach to the Middle East, with his cautious support of the Arab Spring, threatened Israel's security. More ominously from Bibi's point of view, Obama directly engaged with Iran for the nuclear deal in hopes that a less isolated Iran might become less confrontational with its neighbors.

Donald Trump has taken a different approach, to put it mildly, and there's a reason he has a near 70% approval rating in Israel. Trump has reinvigorated U.S. ties with Saudi Arabia and adopted a confrontational approach to Iran. He has withdrawn the U.S. from the nuclear deal. Where Obama hesitated, Trump ordered military strikes against Syria's Bashar Assad in response to his use of chemical weapons.

On Israel itself, Trump has followed through on Washington's decades-old promise to defy Arab criticism by moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. On March 25, he announced the U.S. would set aside

➤ **Benjamin Netanyahu**

precedent to formally recognize Israel's authority over the Golan Heights, a piece of strategically important land seized from Syria during the 1967 war.

Yet the strength of Netanyahu's political position comes less from the change in the White House than from Israel's stable place in the region. Over a decade of Middle East turmoil, Israel has managed to remain mainly above the fray of the upheavals within Arab countries and the Saudi-Iranian proxy wars. This has allowed Netanyahu to maintain a solid bond with the U.S., even when Netanyahu and Obama were at odds, and to build pragmatic relations with Russia, particularly in containing the violence in Syria. It has helped Israel's Prime Minister improve relations with Arab countries that once called for Israel's annihilation. He has built promising ties with China and India.

This is why Bibi's main opponent in this month's elections, his former army chief Benny Gantz, has offered voters a foreign-policy platform virtually identical to the Prime Minister's. He has avoided promises to work toward an independent Palestinian state. He pledges to keep Jerusalem undivided, the Golan defended and the West Bank under full Israeli control. Gantz promises a hard-line approach to Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah. A rocket attack from inside Gaza this week that

destroyed a home and injured seven people in central Israel has given Gantz a new opportunity to attack Netanyahu, who also serves as Defense Minister, and another chance to remind voters how many "terrorists" his army killed in Gaza.



Israel stands in a strong position not simply because Donald Trump bestows favors on its Prime Minister, but because a decade of change in the Middle East has boosted its regional standing and bolstered its security. □

Politics



THE VICTO

*After learning of
Robert Mueller's
findings on
March 24, Trump
quickly claimed
vindication*

PHOTOGRAPH BY
CAROLYN KASTER

A photograph of Donald Trump in profile, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie. He is waving his right hand towards the camera. He is standing next to a dark-colored SUV, with another vehicle visible in the background. The setting appears to be an airfield or parking lot under a cloudy sky.

ORY LAP

**The end
of the
special
counsel's
probe
gives
Donald
Trump
one of the
biggest
wins of his
presidency**

**BY BRIAN
BENNETT**

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PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAD FINISHED A ROUND OF Sunday golf and repaired to his private quarters at his Palm Beach, Fla., club when the news arrived. After 22 months, the findings of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation were in.

Moments before, around 3 p.m. on March 24, Trump's White House lawyer Emmet Flood received a call from Attorney General William Barr's chief of staff, Brian Rabbitt. The Department of Justice official said that after more than 2,800 subpoenas, nearly 500 search warrants and a similar number of witness interviews, Mueller had not established that the Trump campaign or its associates conspired with Russia during the 2016 election. In addition, Mueller declined to draw a conclusion about whether Trump had obstructed justice in the aftermath. Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein immediately cleared the President.

Aides were elated. "This is very good," Trump said, according to an official present. Back at the White House, staff crowded into press secretary Sarah Sanders' office to toast the result with a bottle of sparkling wine. Within hours, Trump's 2020 campaign was making money off the news, texting supporters that Democrats had "raised millions off a lie." Greeting reporters on a Florida tarmac, Trump claimed "complete and total exoneration."

It was one of the biggest victories of the Trump presidency. No collusion, no obstruction—just as Trump had vowed. A special-counsel investigation of this ilk might have proven fatal to Trump's predecessors, yet the President survived it, stiff-arming Mueller's demands for an in-person interview and attacking the legitimacy of the special counsel to stir up his supporters. By the time Trump sat down for a chicken piccata lunch with GOP Senators on March 26, he was also savoring the victory. Trump was "exuberant," recalled Republican Senator Mike Braun of Indiana. "It's apparent that it's a big weight lifted."

Mueller's verdict was not nearly as definitive as the President and his allies would claim. He did not clear Trump



of obstruction, according to a summary of the report Barr sent to Congress. Mueller laid out evidence on both sides, noted the "difficult issues" involved and declined to render a judgment, instead leaving the decision to DOJ brass. As Barr wrote, "The Special Counsel states that 'while this report does not conclude that the President committed a crime, it also does not exonerate him.'" (Indeed, that fact irked Trump when he first heard it, according to a White House official.)

Mueller found that Russia had mounted an unprecedented campaign to influence the 2016 election, spreading disinformation on social media, hacking



After a 22-month probe, Mueller did not find that any Trump campaign officials or associates coordinated with Russia

Democratic computers and engineering the release of damaging emails in an effort to sow discord and help Trump win. The special counsel indicted 34 people and won seven convictions or guilty pleas, including from Trump's former campaign chairman, his deputy campaign manager, his White House National Security Adviser and his longtime personal lawyer. By any historical measure, the Trump presidency remains extraordinarily scandal-scarred.

Which is why the most important result of the Mueller report may be to politically inoculate Trump against the many probes still looming. America has now seen Trump weather a massive

investigation led by a widely respected prosecutor. Somehow, Trump turned what might have been a catastrophe to any other President—a sweeping inquiry into potential collusion with a foreign power to undermine U.S. democracy—into a rebuttal against whatever comes next. “The politics of what’s happened over the last few days just places the President in a much better political position than he probably could have imagined,” says Russell Riley, professor of presidential studies at the University of Virginia.

MUELLER’S FINDINGS MATTER in no small part because of what his investigation came to represent. For

Democrats and many disenchanted Republicans, the special counsel evolved into a symbol of the rule of law itself. His investigation dominated social media and cable news, and his likeness spawned a cottage industry, with Trump’s opponents snapping up prayer candles, action figures and mugs emblazoned with the words IT’S MUELLER TIME.

The former FBI director’s reputation was one reason congressional Democrats were willing to pin so much on the outcome of his investigation. When asked about the Russia investigation, Democrats typically said they would reserve judgment until Mueller completed his work. Now that he has, it’s harder for

Democrats to quibble with the conclusions. "You can't on the one hand defer to Mueller," says Stanley Brand, former counsel for the House of Representatives under Democratic Speaker Tip O'Neill, "and say, Now that we have it, we want to replow that ground."

Some of the Democrats calling for Trump's impeachment have long been wary of staking too much on Mueller's findings. Tom Steyer, the liberal California billionaire who has committed nearly \$100 million toward a pro-impeachment campaign, says he never thought the report would actually move the needle. Waiting for the report, Steyer told TIME in February, would be "a very ill-considered and mistaken idea."

While Democrats were building up the import of the Russia investigation, Trump, after months of cooperation, decided to aggressively criticize Mueller last year. Those rants showed Trump following his instinct to lash out when he feels under attack. "I'm not going to begrudge Donald Trump for defending himself against a witch hunt and a hoax that was proven to be so," says White House spokesperson Hogan Gidley. "He's a counterpuncher."

Once he started, Trump hammered at the investigation's legitimacy incessantly. (In total, he's tweeted 181 times that the probe was a "witch hunt.") Many of the President's detractors snorted at the broadsides, dismissing them as the ravings of a cornered man. But there was power in the mayhem. The President's campaign to discredit the decorated former Marine and lifelong Republican as a rogue prosecutor seems to have had a real effect. Over time, Trump was able to convince supporters that a meticulous inquiry was politically motivated, and the public's views became more and more entrenched along party lines.

Trump's criticism will continue to pay off as the 2020 election nears, predicts former White House deputy press secretary Raj Shah. "On a wide range of issues—whether it's the economy, whether it's national security—you're going to have critics fairly or unfairly criticizing the President," Shah says. "And he's going to be able to say on the biggest, most prominent issue, they were dead wrong, I was dead right, you should believe me. And I think that's going to sell."

The investigations into Trump are far from over

By Abigail Abrams

Robert Mueller's probe is finished, but President Donald Trump still faces more than a dozen other investigations and lawsuits focused on his Administration, businesses, family and associates. Here are some of the legal threats hanging over Trump and his allies:

Roger Stone's trial

Stone, a longtime Trump confidant, was arrested in January 2019 as part of the Mueller investigation and charged with witness tampering and lying to Congress about his communications with WikiLeaks. **His trial is set for November**, and federal prosecutors in D.C. will now handle the case.

The hush-money investigation

This case in the Southern District of New York focuses on payments Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen made on his behalf to women who alleged affairs with Trump. Cohen pleaded guilty in August 2018 to campaign-finance violations and other financial crimes, admitting he had made payments to Karen McDougal and Stormy Daniels to keep them quiet before the 2016 election. **Prosecutors directly implicated the President** when they said in December that Cohen acted "in coordination with and at the direction of" Trump. The investigation into campaign-finance issues is ongoing.

Trump's Inauguration funding

Federal prosecutors in multiple offices have reportedly been looking into the record \$107 million raised for Trump's Inauguration, asking **questions about who the money came from, how it was spent and whether the committee gave donors favors** or special access. Last August, Republican political consultant Sam Patten admitted to steering \$50,000 from a Ukrainian oligarch to Trump's Inauguration committee.

The super-PAC probe

Prosecutors in New York have been looking into **potential wrongdoing related to a pro-Trump super PAC** called Rebuilding America Now, including whether former Trump campaign chair Paul Manafort illegally coordinated with

the group and whether the super PAC received donations from people in Qatar or other Middle Eastern countries, according to the New York Times. So far, this investigation has not resulted in any indictments.

Trump's real estate deals

Prompted by Cohen's testimony, New York State's attorney general is investigating several Trump Organization projects, including a failed attempt to buy the Buffalo Bills football team. **Investigators sent subpoenas to Deutsche Bank and Investors Bank** about the projects in early March. The subpoenas, which Deutsche has acknowledged, requested mortgages, loan applications, lines of credit and other financial information related to Trump properties in Washington, Florida, New York and Chicago.

The Trump Foundation

The New York State attorney general's office sued the Donald J. Trump Foundation and its directors last year, saying they engaged in a "shocking pattern of illegality." **The Trumps agreed to dissolve the foundation in December**, but the civil suit is ongoing, with the attorney general seeking millions in penalties. (The Trumps say the suit is politically motivated.) The foundation is also under investigation for potentially violating state tax laws, which could lead to a criminal referral.

Trump's taxes

The New York State tax department said in October it was looking into allegations brought up in a New York Times investigation into decades of **Trump's tax schemes**. New York City officials have also said they are examining Trump's tax history.

Undocumented immigrants at Trump's golf club

Lawyers for **several undocumented workers at Trump's New Jersey golf club** said the FBI and the New Jersey attorney general's office were examining allegations that the club hired workers using fraudulent papers.

The fog of the Mueller report transcended pure partisanship. By the end, many Americans had no idea what to make of the sprawling investigation. Some grew convinced that no matter what Mueller found, the outcome wouldn't matter. In the days before Barr released his summary of Mueller's conclusions, TIME was given access to a series of focus-group sessions, convened in Des Moines, Iowa, by the Democratic polling firm GBAO on behalf of a group called Protect the Investigation. The researchers sought to study "soft partisans," people who scored relatively low on an assessment of party loyalty. One panel was made up of college-educated Republicans, one of college-educated independents and one of Democrats without college degrees.

'I think a little righteous indignation is warranted.'

TIM MURTAUGH, Trump campaign official, on the President's decision to lash out at critics after the inquiry's conclusion

The similarities were striking. The groups shared a sense that the investigation was merited, the matters were serious, and it was important that justice be done. They were troubled by the idea that politicians and the privileged might get away with things regular people wouldn't. And yet many of the allegations against Trump didn't strike the participants as a big deal. The prevailing view was that there was a lot of funny business going on around Trump—but that the President had likely found a way to keep his hands clean. "I do think he probably did some stuff, but I'm pretty sure he did a good job insulating himself," a 35-year-old Republican man said.

Strikingly, none of the focus-group participants expected the Mueller report to be a game changer. "There may be a lot of pistols, but there probably isn't going to be a smoking gun," a 69-year-old man in the independents' group said. Few said the report was likely to alter their opinion of the President.

Which appears to be the case for many Americans: In a national Fox News poll conducted the week before the report's release, 70% said there was no chance

or only a small chance the report would change their views. A poll by Morning Consult and Politico conducted in the two days following the release of Barr's summary found the President's support was essentially unchanged from a week earlier.

HOURS AFTER BARR revealed Mueller's findings, Trump and his top aides watched television news coverage in his office on Air Force One. Soon they began to stew. "The mood fluctuated from happiness to righteous anger," recalls Gidley. "There was a lot of relief, but there were definitely a lot of questions."

White House officials are hungry to press ahead. They want to use the momentum to push Trump's policy agenda forward, with legislative initiatives on health care, trade and infrastructure, according to two West Wing aides. Trump's liaisons to Capitol Hill say they hope to work with House Democrats on key committees willing to work with them, especially on legislation to repair the country's aging network of highways and bridges.

Yet the White House knows there's little chance of major bipartisan legislation getting through. "There were Democrats who wanted to work with us and Democrats who didn't," says a top White House official, "and I don't think that's really changed."

How lasting Trump's victory proves will depend on a host of factors, including how much of Mueller's actual report sees the light of day. Trump campaign officials believe the end of the investigation creates an opening with independent voters. Yet so far Trump has focused more on exacting vengeance against Democrats and the media than on any attempt at reconciliation.

As his attention shifts to the 2020 election, aides say Trump plans to campaign on his Administration's achievements, from low unemployment rates to prison-reform legislation to confirming conservative judges and gains against the Islamic State. "We will be running on that," says Tim Murtaugh, communications director for Trump's re-election campaign. On the other hand, he adds,

"I think a little righteous indignation is warranted."

Mueller's conclusions have tamped down talk of impeachment among Democratic leaders, who were already wary of publicly embracing the idea. But House Democrats have no plans to let up on their probes of the President, his Administration, his family members or their business dealings with foreign powers. They are already pushing Barr for the release of the full Mueller report and its underlying documents, as well as to continue investigating other Trump controversies.

At the same time, Democrats have been careful to balance their investigative efforts with a renewed emphasis on legislative priorities. For them, the silver lining in the Mueller outcome may be that they can now zero in on issues like lowering health care costs. Within a day of Barr releasing his summary of the Mueller report, the Trump Administration handed Democrats an apparent political gift, telling the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans that it supports the complete invalidation of the Affordable Care Act. Focusing on kitchen-table issues like health care helped Democrats win the House in 2018, and it is the strategy presidential hopefuls plan to use in 2020. "This campaign can't be about [Trump]," said South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg, in an MSNBC interview. "I think part of how we lost our way in 2016 was it was much too much about him, and it left a lot of people back home saying, 'O.K., but nobody is talking about me.'"

The outcome of Robert Mueller's investigation was as disappointing for Democrats as it was buoying for Republicans. But in the end, it may have been a boon for U.S. democracy. For nearly two years, the fate of the Trump presidency has been bound up in a rare and opaque legal limbo. Mueller may have punted the question of whether Trump had obstructed justice to the President's handpicked Attorney General. But in the process, he returned the power to render a verdict on the Trump presidency to American voters. The final report will come at the ballot box, on Nov. 3, 2020.—With reporting by ALANA ABRAMSON, MOLLY BALL and TESSA BERENSON/WASHINGTON and CHARLOTTE ALTER/NEW YORK

Mueller offers a lesson in the power of reason

By Jon Meacham

ALMOST A CENTURY AGO, IN THE AFTERMATH OF the First World War, the journalist Walter Lippmann, then 32 years old, published an influential and disturbing critique of democracy and its future. The mood in the U.S. was anxious—about immigration, about race, about women, about the nation's role in the world, about civil liberties, about religion, even about science (the Scopes trial was a few years off). The 1920 Census had found that more Americans now lived in cities than on farms, and the broad introduction of commercial radio at around the same time was reshaping the nation's media landscape; such forces had helped lead to the founding of a second, widely popular Ku Klux Klan—a movement designed to protect Anglo-Saxon superiority in the face of shifting demographic trends. It was, in short, a time not wholly unlike our own.

Into this climate came Lippmann's book *Public Opinion*, which argued that the complexity of the changing world made true perception and genuinely popular self-government impossible. Skeptical about the capacity of democracy to arrive at wise decisions, Lippmann proposed a system of bureaus of experts who would gather facts and present analysis to guide deliberations about public affairs—a populist's nightmare come to life. The book can be hard going, and Lippmann's conclusions are excessively Olympian, but his analysis of the limitations of the political mind resonate today. "We do not first see, and then define," he wrote, "we define first and then see."

Put another way, we tend to assess events not in the light of reason but with the flames of partisan passion. What we make of a given moment is governed less by merits and details and more by the mores and demands of our particular political tribe.

This is the great fact of our time, and it couldn't be more relevant in the post-Mueller report universe. Reason compels opponents of Donald Trump who so hoped the investigation would bring him down to accept the report's apparent conclusions. Reason too should lead Trump supporters who have long denounced Robert Mueller to acknowledge that the probe they believed a witch hunt was in fact a legitimate inquiry.

Neither, of course, is likely to follow this counsel, and therein lies the stubbornness of the problem Lippmann identified nearly 100 years ago. We can, Lippmann wrote, "best understand the furies of war and politics by remembering that almost the



The special counsel's 22-month investigation captivated the nation—for good and ill

whole of each party believes absolutely in its picture of the opposition, that it takes as fact, not what is, but what it supposes to be the fact." Jane Addams, a paragon of the Progressive Era, made a similar point, observing, "We know instinctively that if we grow contemptuous of our fellows, and consciously limit our intercourse to certain kinds of people whom we have previously decided to respect, we not only tremendously circumscribe our range of life, but limit the scope of our ethics."

I'M NOT NAIVE about the prospects for a new Age of Enlightenment to come and rescue us from tribal impulses, not least because even the Age of Enlightenment had to find ways to manage, not repeal, the perennial tension between reason and passion. "In every free and deliberating society, there must, from the nature of man, be opposite parties, and violent dissensions and discords," Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1798, "and one of these, for the most part, must prevail over the other for a longer or shorter time."



ALEX BRANDON—AP

Partisanship is not intrinsically bad. To Jefferson, what was worth seeking to avoid, then and now, was reflexive, not reflective, party spirit. “I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever, in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself,” he wrote in 1789. “Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all.”

Subsequent generations have quoted these lines—especially the last sentence—as a way of suggesting that partisanship is anathema to the American spirit. That’s not quite right, and it sets an impossible standard for the present. It’s more useful for our current moment to recall that Jefferson also wrote this: “Men have differed in opinion, and been divided into parties by these opinions, from the first origin of societies; and in all governments where they have been permitted freely to think and to speak. The same political

parties which now agitate the U.S. have existed through all time.” The questions that defined American politics, Jefferson added, were the same kinds of questions “which kept the states of Greece and Rome in eternal convulsions.”

SO WHAT TO DO in our time of entrenched polarization? We must give reason a chance. We can’t guarantee the triumph of fact over conviction; in Lippmann’s terms, we will never be able to always see and then define. But we should at least try to give fair play a place in the arena, and in the trying, we may just find that evidence will have the power to change minds rather than simply affirm what we already believe to be the case.

Experience and history can help us; both can be orienting forces. “When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course,” said the American statesman Daniel Webster in 1830. “Let us imitate this prudence, and before we float farther on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are.”

It is at least a beginning. “Reason is not a Thing, or a Person, much less a God,” wrote the 20th century British historian Sir Michael Howard. “It is an *activity*, and a highly individual one. It is *people* thinking and judging: more, it is individual *persons* thinking and judging. Neither is History a Thing: it is what people think, write and believe about the past. A knowledge of the past is essential in making political or moral judgments, but ‘History’ as such does not judge. That is done by people; and best done by people free to think, read, inform themselves and debate before they decide; and having decided, be free to change their minds.”

To do so requires the willingness to think before we decide, and to weigh before we weigh in. “Every man whose business it is to think,” Lippmann observed in *Public Opinion*, “knows that he must for part of the day create about himself a pool of silence.”

Whether staring at the news feed on our phones, or cable news in a corner bar, too few among us manage to heed this counsel. But since it’s the business of every citizen to think, we all must find world enough and time to assess rather than to agitate. The President could learn from this; so can the rest of us.

Meacham is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and the author, most recently, of The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels

Politics

THE DECIDER

**William Barr
controls the
fate of the
Mueller report**

BY TESSA BERENSON

*Barr's handling
of the special
counsel's
findings drew
Democrats' ire*

PHOTOGRAPH BY
DAVID BUTOW
FOR TIME





IT WAS A SOMBER DAY IN THE WASHINGTON National Cathedral Dec. 5 as thousands gathered to mourn the death of former President George H.W. Bush. Beneath the glittering stained-glass windows, the crowd of political luminaries wistfully recalled the gentler era of bipartisanship the late leader represented.

Vermont's Patrick Leahy, a Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, took the moment to reconnect with Bush's Attorney General, William Barr. Leahy had known the Republican power lawyer for decades. Speculation was swirling about whom President

Donald Trump would ask to fill Barr's old job after Jeff Sessions' departure. Pulling him aside, Leahy urged Barr to take the post again. "Bill, we need you back," Leahy said, according to a Justice Department official with knowledge of the conversation. (Leahy's staff said the Senator does not recall the discussion.)

Barr demurred, but he had a secret that very few of the mourners knew: he had already accepted the job. It hadn't been an easy choice—Barr had turned Trump down once already. And Barr knew the comity on display at the Bush funeral wouldn't last. At his youngest daughter's wedding three days later, shortly after Trump announced his nomination, Barr quipped that at least she was changing her name before it was dragged through the mud at his confirmation hearings. And in fact, when Barr's nomination came up for a vote two months later, Leahy voted against him, along with nearly every other Democrat.

The partisanship has already intensified now that Barr has become the keeper of the conclusions from special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation. After nearly two years of work, Mueller submitted his final report to Barr on Friday, March 22. Two days later, Barr sent Congress a four-page letter summarizing Mueller's findings. The investigation did not establish that members of the Trump campaign or its associates conspired or coordinated with Russia, Barr said, and it was inconclusive on whether Trump obstructed justice. On that question, Mueller laid out the facts on both sides and left it to Barr to render a decision—which Barr and Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein did with alacrity, concluding that "the evidence developed during the Special Counsel's investigation is not sufficient to establish that the President committed an obstruction-of-justice offense." Just five weeks into the job, the new Attorney General had helped lift a cloud hanging over the Trump presidency.

Barr's importance will only grow in the coming weeks, as he determines how much of Mueller's report to share with the White House, Congress and the American people. He is working on scrubbing Mueller's report of grand-jury information and details pertaining to ongoing investigations. Trump has claimed victory, saying

it "wouldn't bother" him if Barr wanted to make the whole report public.

Already, Barr's decision on obstruction has angered congressional Democrats, who blasted him for delivering a verdict in two days on a matter that Mueller spent 22 months probing. Moreover, they note that Barr is a political appointee who wrote a memo last year criticizing Mueller's obstruction inquiry. "The Attorney General's comments make it clear that Congress must step in to get the truth," said House Judiciary chairman Jerrold Nadler, a Democrat from New York, who said he will call Barr to testify. "We cannot simply rely on what may be a hasty, partisan interpretation of the facts."

More than politics is at stake in how Barr handles the close of the Mueller probe. The reputation of the Department of Justice, attacked on the one hand for two years by the President who leads it and on the other by Democrats with oversight authority on Capitol Hill, hangs on the Attorney General. So too does the balance of power between the White House and Congress.

But that's partly why Barr took the job. Close aides say he believes the Justice Department has gone astray, internally and in the public perception, and he wants to bring it back in line. "He is in sync with the law-enforcement goals of the President and the Administration," Rosenstein tells TIME. "He views this as an opportunity to advance those goals and also to preserve and enhance the reputation of the department."

What's clear is that Barr is making history. He alone will decide, on the basis of his experience, beliefs and personality, how this consequential chapter of the Trump presidency plays out. His closest aides recognize the power of the moment. "There's a lot of things coming down the pike at us, there's a lot of decisions that are going to need to be made," admits one, "and it will be kind of viewed through the lens of how [Barr] handles things."

BARR'S RELATIONSHIP with Trump began nearly two years ago, in June 2017, when he took a meeting at the White House because the President wanted Barr to join his personal legal team. It was a brief interaction, Barr testified

The Mueller crib sheet

Barr sent Congress a letter on March 24 summarizing the special counsel's principal conclusions, including on two key questions: whether any Trump campaign officials or allies conspired with Russia, and whether the President committed obstruction of justice. Here's what Barr said:



at his confirmation hearing in January 2019, during which he declined Trump's job offer because he "didn't want to stick my head into that meat grinder." When Trump was curious about his relationship with Mueller, Barr said he told the President that the special counsel is a "straight shooter." (Barr was Mueller's boss as Attorney General under Bush, when Mueller served as head of the criminal division.) Barr gave Trump his phone number and left and didn't hear from the President again for more than a year. But in the fall of 2018, Trump came calling once more, this time to talk about the Attorney General job.

Barr said no again. He was at an age when his work and personal life had finally achieved an enviable balance. Barr even suggested other contenders to Trump. But as the President continued to look, a chorus of people bombarded both Barr and the White House counsel's office with calls for Barr to fill the

primary consideration for the Special Counsel's investigation was whether any individuals associated with the Trump campaign – including individuals associated with the Trump campaign – joined the Russian conspiracies to influence the election, which would be a federal crime. The Special Counsel's investigation did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. presidential election. As the report states: "[T]he investigation did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities."¹

"factual investigation" into these matters, the Special Counsel considered whether the conduct under Department standards governing prosecution and declination decisions but ultimately determined not to make a traditional prosecutorial judgment. The Special Counsel therefore did not draw a conclusion – one way or the other – as to whether the examined conduct constituted obstruction. Instead, for each of the relevant actions investigated, the report sets out evidence on both sides of the question and leaves unresolved what the Special Counsel views as "difficult issues" of law and fact.

Reviewing the Special Counsel's final report on these issues, consulting with Department officials, including the Office of Legal Counsel; and applying the principles of federal prosecution that guide our charging decisions, Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and I have concluded that the evidence developed during the Special Counsel's investigation is not sufficient to establish that the President committed an obstruction-of-justice offense. Our determination was made without regard to, and is not based on, the constitutional considerations that surround the indictment and criminal prosecution of a sitting president.²

requested the assistance of the Special Counsel in identifying all (b)(6) information contained in the report as quickly as possible. Separately, I also must identify any information that could impact other ongoing matters, including those that the Special Counsel has referred to other offices. As soon as that process is complete, I will be in a position to move forward expeditiously in determining what can be released in light of applicable law, regulations, and Departmental policies.

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job, according to several people close to Barr. One offering advice was Barr's friend Robert Kimmitt, a former U.S. ambassador to Germany. "When he and I spoke about it, I said it's one of those pristinely binary decisions," Kimmitt recalls. "It's great for the country and not as great for you."

It was in the late fall, at a retreat with the external advisory board to CIA Director Gina Haspel, on which Barr sat, that the lawyer finally acquiesced. As former government officials at the gathering hounded him to take the position, "he finally kind of relented," says a senior Justice Department official. "A light clicked on in his brain, and he said, 'Well, maybe I do have to go do this.'" Another Justice Department official says that when people ask Barr now why he changed his mind, he'll often reply in his typically blunt style, "I just did."

It's not surprising it took Barr a while to get there. In normal circumstances, At-

torney General is one of the most difficult jobs in government. Nestled within the Executive Branch, the Justice Department is caught between a traditional investigative independence and duty to the President, at whose pleasure the Attorney General serves. It's a singular job, and a critical one, that relies on the judgment and character of the Attorney General to navigate the relationship.

And these are not normal circumstances. Barr inherited an agency battered by the President, beset by scandals and facing challenges ranging from the Mueller report to criminal-justice reform and immigration enforcement. Barr spent his first weeks back on the job getting briefed up, arriving at the office at around 8 a.m. and leaving at around 7 p.m., according to his chief of staff, learning everything he could about the policy issues at play.

Barr also focused on morale. When he arrived at the northwest-D.C. building for his first day of work in February, he re-

fused the traditional "clap in" for incoming Attorneys General and instead decided to host a three-hour reception for career officials and political appointees. Aides say he paid for the wine and snacks out of his own pocket. Since then, he has organized a weekly lunch for top department officials, and he typically meets with at least one U.S. Attorney each day.

By far the hardest challenge Barr faces is bringing the special-counsel process to a smooth conclusion. The responsibility of overseeing it devoured his immediate predecessors. Sessions was mercilessly attacked by Trump for recusing himself, acting AG Matthew Whitaker was excoriated by congressional Democrats for being too close to Trump, and Deputy AG Rosenstein plans to leave soon. (Perhaps in a nod to the pressures of the job, Rosenstein keeps a small sign in his office that says KEEP MOVING FORWARD.)

The first big test began early on Friday afternoon, March 22, when a security officer from the special counsel's office delivered Mueller's report. At 4:30 p.m., Rosenstein called Mueller to thank him for his service, according to a DOJ official. A few minutes later, Barr's chief of staff, Brian Rabbitt, called Trump's lawyer Emmet Flood to alert him that the report had arrived.

Then Barr, Rosenstein and their top advisers settled in to review what one DOJ official describes as a "comprehensive" report and to draft a letter to Congress outlining Mueller's principal findings. They worked into the evening on Friday and then all day Saturday, pausing only to eat sandwiches from Au Bon Pain for lunch. By Sunday afternoon, the letter to Congress was done. Rabbitt called Flood at around 3 p.m. to tell the President's lawyer the conclusions, according to a DOJ official, and soon after, the four-page note was made public. From there, Barr went to church for Sunday evening Mass before heading to an oyster bar for dinner.

NOW BARR HAS SOLE DISCRETION over what to do with Mueller's report. The regulations governing the dénouement of the special counsel's work are spare. Barr will decide how much of the report to share. And House Democrats are eager to interrogate him about those decisions. "There are so many profoundly serious questions that the letter glosses over,"

says Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, a former state attorney general and a member of the Judiciary Committee. “What Barr has done essentially is to frame the message without providing any substance. He has created headlines without access to the real information. The letter raises more questions than provides answers.”

Barr has already realized some of Democrats’ biggest fears on a key aspect of Mueller’s investigation. In June 2018, Barr wrote an unsolicited memo to Rosenstein that was skeptical of the obstruction angle of Mueller’s probe. “Mueller’s obstruction theory is fatally misconceived,” Barr wrote in the memo—which was shared with some of Trump’s lawyers—arguing that it would damage the institution of the presidency.

In Barr’s letter to Congress, the public learned that Mueller did not come to a conclusion either way on whether Trump obstructed justice and instead left that decision to Barr. After reviewing the evidence with Rosenstein over the course of a weekend, Barr wrote that it was “not sufficient” to determine obstruction.

“We knew from his confirmation hearing that Attorney General Barr would never conclude the President obstructed justice,” said Rhode Island Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, a Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, “a decision which he appears to have made with astonishing speed.”

A Justice Department official says the decision was not as swift as it might seem. Barr and Rosenstein received a briefing from Mueller three weeks earlier, according to the official, during which the special counsel informed them that he would not be making a judgment on whether Trump’s conduct constituted obstruction. That gave Barr time to prepare. “It would be silly to think that Bill Barr made his decision out of thin air,” the official says. The official also notes that most of the facts Barr weighed on this matter were publicly available: “You all know basically almost as much as we do.”

BARR IS IN THE TWILIGHT of a career that has contained no shortage of tough decisions. As Attorney General under Bush, he appointed three special counsels, including one to probe the House banking scandal in 1992. He handles is-



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Barr joins President George H.W. Bush for the announcement of his nomination as AG in 1991

sues quickly and decisively, former colleagues say. “He copes with difficult situations very calmly,” says James Richmond, who oversaw prosecutions arising from the savings-and-loan crisis under Barr in the early 1990s. “When he blows up, he blows up and it’s over. It doesn’t go beyond a minute or two, because he realizes it’s the bigger issue that he’s got to solve.”

Barr was born in 1950 and grew up on New York’s Upper West Side. His parents were both educators, but Barr’s interest in government and Republican politics developed early. In elementary school, he decided he supported Richard Nixon, according to a 1991 *Washington Post* article. In high school, he told his guidance counselor he wanted to lead the CIA one day.

In order to make that happen, he focused on Chinese studies at Columbia University in both undergraduate and graduate school. He joined the CIA in 1973, serving in the Chinese unit and its legislative-affairs office. It was a critical period that foreshadowed his current challenge. The Church Committee was probing the CIA’s extrajudicial activities, from testing LSD on unwitting American subjects to spying on citizens.

Barr had a front-row seat as the Legislative and Executive branches negotiated a new balance of power to protect civil liberties and preserve the national-security authority of the President.

Barr attended law school at night while he worked at the agency, leaving in 1977 for a clerkship with Judge Malcolm Wilkey on the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals. Later he served in President Ronald Reagan’s Administration in 1982 and then entered private practice before becoming head of DOJ’s Office of Legal Counsel in 1989. From there, his rise through the Justice Department was meteoric. He became Deputy Attorney General in 1990 and took the top job the year after that. After he left the Justice Department at the end of the first Bush Administration, Barr became executive vice president and general counsel of GTE Corp., going on to become general counsel of Verizon when GTE merged with Bell Atlantic in 2000 to form the combined company.

Barr could be intimidating, former colleagues say, but he had a quick, self-deprecating sense of humor and an approachable leadership style. “He was not hierarchical at all,” says Daniel Levin, who served as Barr’s chief of staff the last time he was Attorney General and is now a partner at White & Case. “He made it absolutely clear I wasn’t a gatekeeper and I was not to keep anybody out



who needed to see or wanted to see him.”

In 1992, Los Angeles erupted into riots after a jury acquitted four police officers of beating Rodney King. Barr decided he needed to intervene. Just 41 years old and in his second year as Attorney General, he had to figure out how to marshal the force of the federal government to stabilize the crisis. So he sent one of his most trusted lieutenants to L.A. to handle the situation from the ground: Robert Mueller, then head of DOJ’s criminal division.

Many of the weighty decisions Barr faced during his first stint as Attorney General he made in consultation with Mueller, who became a close enough friend that Mueller attended two of Barr’s daughters’ weddings—though the two men have avoided socializing in the current circumstances. Barr led the department’s response to health care fraud. He also pushed a variety of tough-on-crime policies, including enforcing Project Triggerlock, which prosecuted repeat offenders under federal weapons laws to impose harsher sentences.

In 1992, Barr issued a memo titled “The Case for More Incarceration.” It has proved controversial. Senator Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat who is running for President, criticized Barr for it during the Attorney General’s confirmation process. Some who served with Barr last time say his tough-

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Barr was Mueller’s boss during his first stint at DOJ, and the two are close friends

on-crime stance fit broadly with the enforcement philosophy of the era, even if Barr was on the stricter side. “I didn’t see it as having a racial bent,” says Wayne Budd, who is African American and served as Associate Attorney General under Barr in 1992.

Barr is a devout Catholic and loyal family man, friends say, who likes to go bird hunting and often entertains people by telling stories or talking about military and European history. He’s also an accomplished bagpiper who’s been known to pipe in competitions, at family events and at parties. (During the Bush Administration, Barr was once piping at a Christmas party when he was suddenly called into the Situation Room, and he had to race to change out of his kilt.)

His jocular side can also mask a certain ferocity. In 1991, while serving as acting Attorney General, Barr authorized a dangerous predawn FBI raid on a federal prison in Alabama to confront a deteriorating hostage situation. Everyone was freed, and there were no fatalities. “He’s one of those guys who can make very tough decisions and doesn’t have to play Hamlet,” says Christopher Landau,

who knew Barr from their time together at the law firm Kirkland & Ellis. “He’s a hard-ass.”

BARR’S ROLE in this drama is far from over. His next big decision will be over what details from the full Mueller report the White House can suppress. It’s an open question whether Barr will send the report to Trump’s lawyers before Congress so that they can decide whether to assert Executive privilege. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said they need to “make sure we’re protecting the office of the presidency” as they consider Executive-privilege questions, and Democrats are worried that Barr’s belief in a strong executive will prompt him to defer to the White House on that score. “There has to be some reasonable opportunity to review and assert Executive privilege, but it should be denied as much as possible,” says Delaware Senator Chris Coons, a Democrat on the Judiciary Committee. “That’s where I think the ideological views of the Attorney General may have the greatest potential to threaten the transparency” of the report.

Many congressional Democrats are already insisting that Congress be provided with both Mueller’s full report and the underlying documents. Barr will also have to decide whether to heed congressional summonses to testify under oath about the investigation—and he may play a role in deciding whether Mueller testifies as well. Some congressional Democrats have threatened to issue subpoenas if they don’t get the documents in a timely manner, but subpoenas are difficult to enforce. Depending on how aggressive Barr’s posture is toward Congress, the fight could end up in court.

It’s a multifront war, even before considering the fact that Trump still faces ongoing investigations in the U.S. Attorney’s office for the Southern District of New York, which also reports to Barr. Many of Barr’s friends and former colleagues say he is calm in times of stress. The pressure focuses his mind, they say, and accelerates his decisionmaking process rather than paralyzing it. He’ll need that skill more than ever. The Attorney General, who had to be talked into taking the job, will have a big role in shaping the presidency of the man who hired him. —With reporting by MASSIMO CALABRESI/WASHINGTON □

World

SHE WAS NEXT IN LINE FOR PRESIDENT

THE
POLITICIAN
Until January,
Yulia Tymoshenko
led polls as
the most
experienced
challenger ...



WHO WILL BE THE NEXT

HE PLAYS ONE ON TV



THE
COMEDIAN

... but Volodymyr Zelensky's unlikely presidential run has upended the race

T LEADER OF UKRAINE?

BY SIMON SHUSTER/KIEV

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AT FIRST IT WAS HARD TO TELL whether the clip was serious. Standing next to a Christmas tree, Volodymyr Zelensky, one of the most famous comedians in Ukraine, posted a video on New Year's Eve announcing his bid for the presidency. Most people in Ukraine already knew him as the guy who plays the President on television. In his hit sitcom, *Servant of the People*, he stars as a history teacher who gets elected by accident and becomes the only honest leader in a system full of crooks.

But his real-life campaign was no joke. Zelensky has been the front runner in the race since January. In most surveys, roughly twice as many people say they will vote for him as for his closest rivals during the first round of voting on March 31. Polls suggest he would also beat any challenger in the runoff set for April 21, when Zelensky is expected to face the incumbent, President Petro Poroshenko, a candy magnate who has led Ukraine through five years of conflict with Russia.

The matchup between them might seem amusing, as opposed to terrifying, were it not for the fault lines that run through Ukraine. The conflict along the border with Russia has already claimed over 13,000 lives. More than a million people have fled the fighting. The U.S. and its allies have sent weapons to help defend Ukraine and imposed sanctions to punish Russia. The resulting standoff has brought the Cold War back to life along the eastern edge of Europe, and the next Ukrainian President will need to keep it from turning hot.

Zelensky says he'll manage it. "Try not to worry," he told TIME in his dressing room one night in March after the premiere of his new variety show in Kiev. "We'll figure it out."

But what exactly happens if he doesn't? Five years on from the revolution on Maidan Square, where police killed scores of protesters before the old regime collapsed, the new one in Kiev remains mired in corruption, despised by

its people and one skirmish away from being invaded by the nuclear power next door. The rumble of that war has always risked drawing in the U.S. and Europe. But the more likely outcome if the fighting drags on is what diplomats call "Ukraine fatigue"—the deepening sense in foreign capitals that the country is a lost cause, too dysfunctional to save from Russia's clutches.

Zelensky might be the one to prove them wrong. With help from some savvy advisers and, at least according to his opponents, the backing of an oligarch who is wanted in Ukraine over a multibillion-dollar fraud, he has built a campaign that humiliated the elites by harnessing the nation's fury against them. No other politician (except perhaps the former reality-TV star who occupies the Oval Office) has provided a truer test of the theory that politics in our age is just a form of show business.

It certainly feels that way to Zelensky's rivals. "It's not just Ukraine. This is a trend all over the world," says Yulia Tymoshenko, the former Prime Minister who is now polling in second place. "It's the total degeneration of representative democracy." With the right spin machine and enough money to manipulate voters on social media, she says, "You could make a Senator out of a horse."

Or a President out of a comic. And why not? In a system as corrupt as the one in Ukraine, Zelensky may be right to treat political experience as a liability. He says he plans to "crowdsource" ideas for running the country. He has declined to take part in debates or publish a detailed electoral platform. Instead he has focused on entertainment. The third season of *Servant of the People*—in which his character (spoiler alert) saves Ukraine from ruin—is due to drop in its entirety a few days before the election, giving voters just enough time to binge-watch it before heading to the polls.

In lieu of rallies, Zelensky is also touring a variety show complete with comedians, dancers and at least one *Playboy* Playmate. He urged the crowd on opening night not to think too hard about the upcoming vote. "No campaigning tonight," he said. "It's just a show. Besides, you paid money for it." After a pause to let the weirdness of it all sink in, he added, "Who's ever heard of such a thing?"



THE BATTLE for the presidency once looked like an easy win for Ukraine's most powerful woman. Tymoshenko was leading in the polls last year because no other candidate could claim her credentials: two terms as Prime Minister, two campaigns for the presidency, two years behind bars as a prisoner of conscience and two popular uprisings that saw protesters carry her portrait like a talisman against corruption.

Her office in Kiev looks like a walk-in résumé. The walls are plastered with photos of her leading the Orange Revolution to victory in 2004. There's a vitrine full of gifts from the envoys of China and a framed photo of her with the original Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, the U.K. Prime Minister. On Tymoshenko's desk, beside a portrait of her daughter, stands a picture of her with Donald Trump at his Inauguration, the blond crown of her braid somehow outshining the mane of the U.S. President.

Still, she doesn't fault Ukrainians for supporting Zelensky. "We can't blame people for this," she says one afternoon in March, when polls had her ahead of the President, suggesting she might be the



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Zelensky backstage at his variety show in Kiev on March 19

one to face the comedian in a runoff vote. “Their outrage is a sign of powerlessness,” she says. “They are so disappointed, so unhappy with the system that they start looking for new ways out. And when they don’t find that, the rise of Zelenskies is like a protest, a response to the feeling of hopelessness.”

That feeling has indeed become common here in Ukraine. According to the World Bank, the economy has shrunk by nearly half since 2014, when Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his troops to seize the prime Ukrainian tourist destination of Crimea and its factories and coal mines in the east. The national currency lost about 70% of its value in the year after the war, and hasn’t recovered. In a Gallup survey published in March, only 9% of Ukrainians expressed trust in their government, lower than in any other nation in the world.

Ask them why, and a likely answer will be corruption, whose scale has long evoked as much awe as disgust in

Ukraine. The friends and allies of Viktor Yanukovych, who served as President from 2010 to 2014, stand accused of siphoning at least \$37 billion of government money into offshore bank accounts.

Today, Yanukovych is best remembered for two things among his people: the revolution he sparked in 2014 by choosing to ally with Russia instead of integrating with the European Union; and the palace he built for himself while in office, an almost comically luxurious compound near Kiev.

In the final days of the revolution five years ago, when police snipers killed scores of demonstrators and precipitated the collapse of the regime, Yanukovych packed some valuables into a helicopter and fled to Russia, where he resides today under Putin’s protection. After a short bout of looting, the revolutionaries who chased him away decided to turn his villa into a “museum of corruption,” a place for tourists to marvel at his greed, taking selfies next to the faux Greek ruins Yanukovych had built to serve as lawn furniture. “All the building power of the state was devoted to erecting this place,” says Lyudmila Anatolieva, a tour guide

at the estate’s private sauna complex, where the floors are inlaid with semi-precious stones.

One of the first acts of Ukraine’s new leaders in 2014 was to set Tymoshenko free. She had served about two years out of a seven-year sentence handed down in 2011 for abuse of office, a punishment widely seen as part of Yanukovych’s vendetta against her. But even after that stint as a political prisoner, Tymoshenko could not regain much public trust. The fortune she made in the energy trade in the 1990s, along with an unfavorable gas deal she signed with Putin while serving as Prime Minister in 2009, caused many Ukrainians to see her as an oligarch and a traitor. That history also came with an unflattering nickname: the Gas Princess.

“It was Tymoshenko who broke the rules,” Yanukovych told TIME inside the presidential palace in 2012, when he was at the height of his power. “And judgment will come.”

It came two years later for Yanukovych. But Tymoshenko did not escape it, either. She won only 13% of the vote in the elections that followed the revolution. Her approval ratings have barely budged above that level since. When asked about the reasons, Tymoshenko singles out one man for blame—the U.S. political consultant Paul Manafort, who worked for Yanukovych and his allies for more than a decade before he became Donald Trump’s campaign chairman in 2016. “For money,” Tymoshenko says bitterly, “he worked against me for over 10 years, distorting my name, humiliating me, and trying to smear my work and myself as a politician.”

Judgment has come for Manafort, too. As part of special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation of Russian interference in the U.S. presidential race, a judge in Washington, D.C., sentenced him to six years in prison for illegally lobbying on behalf of the Yanukovych regime. Much of that lobbying was done in defense of Tymoshenko’s imprisonment. So she felt a sense of satisfaction when the verdict came down. “Everything becomes clear eventually,” she tells TIME a few days later. But the stains on her reputation have never quite washed off.

Zelensky is, by contrast, a blank slate when it comes to politics. Born and raised in the industrial backwater of Kryvyi Rih (“Crooked Horn”), which he

World

has described as “a city of bandits,” Zelensky and his childhood friends formed their comedy troupe at the end of the 1990s and named it Kvartal 95 (District 95) after the neighborhood where they grew up.

The troupe has grown into the biggest production studio in the country. Its offices take up the top three floors of a high-rise in Kiev, with a view onto the TV tower that beams their lineup across the capital. “Our work hasn’t changed much since we went into politics,” says Vadym Pereverzev, a co-founder of the studio. “We went from writing jokes to writing slogans. The difference is not that big.”

A lot of their comedy feeds into the campaign, either by deflecting criticism of Zelensky or casting him as the image of humility and strength. His presidential character in *Servant of the People* receives pep talks from his visions of Abraham Lincoln and Julius Caesar before forcing Ukraine’s politicians to ride bicycles to work. “This makes our opponents go apoplectic,” says Zelensky’s campaign manager, Dmitry Razumkov. “But legally it does not count as campaigning.”

Their main vulnerability throughout the race has been Zelensky’s relationship with Ihor Kolomoisky, the oligarch whose television channel airs most of his material, including *Servant of the People*. Though he still runs most of his businesses from exile in Israel, Kolomoisky is a wanted man both in Russia and Ukraine.

As the conflict between the two nations escalated in 2014, authorities in Moscow issued a warrant for Kolomoisky’s arrest on charges of engaging in “prohibited methods of warfare”—a reference to the private militias that Kolomoisky formed to defend his assets and fight off the Russian invasion.

In Ukraine, his legal troubles began in 2016, when the government paid a bailout worth \$5.6 billion to rescue and nationalize Kolomoisky’s bank. He has since been charged with defrauding the bank for vast sums of money. The billionaire has denied these and other charges, and he did not reply to interview requests from TIME. But many of his opponents have pointed out how useful it would be for him to install Zelensky as President. “It’s so obvious they’re in cahoots,” Tymoshenko told me.

The comedian’s response? “I’m no-



▲
The incumbent Poroshenko, left on this billboard, and rival Tymoshenko lag behind Zelensky in the polls

body’s puppet.” Much harder to deny is his partnership with Kolomoisky’s television network, whose news division has also been shilling for Zelensky for months. Its most famous anchor and journalist, Dmitry Gordon, even has a sketch in the new variety show, which features him declaring that, after election day, “Everyone will be Zelensky’s best friend.”

Diplomats have already tried to get inside his head. Many have come away puzzled, says a Western diplomat briefed on Zelensky’s meetings with foreign ambassadors. “He wasn’t in a position to specify what he intends to do when he wins,” the diplomat tells TIME. “On the substance we just don’t know.”

His show offers some clues. In one episode of *Servant of the People*, the President of Ukraine, as played by Zelensky, tells a group of foreign envoys to “go climb up an ass.” In another, he has a vision of mowing down every lawmaker in parliament with a pair of submachine guns while Little Richard’s “Long Tall Sally” plays in the background. In today’s Ukraine, all of that counts as a twisted sort of populism. “It seems clear that people want the President from the TV show,” says the Western diplomat. “We don’t know if Zelensky will be that President.”

BUT UKRAINE’S allies—and its voters—may prefer a blank slate to the incumbent’s record. Poroshenko has been

hounded by corruption allegations for months. One of his top prosecutors was recorded telling the targets of corruption investigations how best to avoid them. Another one of the President’s allies has been accused of smuggling weapons in from Russia and selling them at a mark-up to the military in Ukraine.

These scandals have infuriated Ukraine’s allies in the West. But the prospect of a Tymoshenko presidency also makes them nervous. During a visit to Washington in December, she stunned her hosts by suggesting that China should help mediate the conflict in Ukraine. Her team has also suggested that Ukraine should threaten to build nuclear weapons in part to get attention on the global stage. “Never say never,” her top foreign-policy adviser, Hryhoriy Nemyria, told TIME about the nuclear issue. “This could really help Ukraine’s argument.”

Asked to weigh in on such matters, Zelensky says he will appoint the best experts to resolve them. He has enough on his mind already. Someone had called in a bomb threat during the premiere of his variety show, and police brought dogs to sniff around the concession stands before deciding not to evacuate the theater.

Although the call had been anonymous, Zelensky blamed it on the government. “There’s your answer to the question of what motivates me,” he said. With jokes and metaphors, he went on for a while about the need to save the country from its current leaders. “If I didn’t run, all of this might be gone soon,” he said finally, waving at the costume racks and Hollywood mirrors. “Just like that. Poof. Up in smoke.” □

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VOICE F O R T H E PLANET

David Attenborough's new series is more than just another nature documentary

By Dan Stewart/London

IT'S THE VOICE YOU NOTICE FIRST. IN person, David Attenborough speaks in the same awestruck hush he has used in dozens of nature documentaries, a crisp half whisper that is often mimicked but seldom matched. Ninety-two years of use may have softened its edges, but still it carries the command of authority. Sitting in his home in the Richmond neighborhood of west London for one in a series of conversations, I feel compelled to drink a second cup of tea when he offers. It somehow seems wrong to say no.

In his native U.K., Attenborough is held in the kind of esteem usually reserved for royalty. Over decades—first as a television executive, then as a wildlife filmmaker and recently as a kind of elder statesman for the planet—he has achieved near beatific status. He was knighted by the Queen in 1985 and is usually referred to as Sir David.

As he walked into the Royal Botanic Gardens for TIME's portrait shoot on the day of our interview, the mere sight of him caused members of the public and staff alike to break into goofy smiles.

Attenborough pioneered a style of wildlife filmmaking that brought viewers to remote landscapes and gave them an intimate perspective on the wonders of nature. Frans de Waal, the renowned Dutch primatologist, says he regularly uses clips from Attenborough's shows in lectures. "He has shaped the views of millions of people about nature," he says. "Always respectful, always knowledgeable, he takes us by the hand to show us what is left of the nature around us."

In the autumn of his life, Attenborough has largely retreated from filmmaking on location but lends his storytelling abilities to wildlife documentaries in collabora-

tion with filmmakers he has mentored. His most famous work, the 2006 BBC series *Planet Earth*, set a benchmark in the use of high-definition cameras and had a budget equal to that of a Hollywood movie. Among its highlights was the first footage of a snow leopard, the impossibly rare Asian wildcat that hunts high in the Himalayas. More than a decade after its initial release, *Planet Earth* remains among the all-time best-selling nonfiction DVDs.

Now Attenborough is putting his voice and the weight of authority he has accumulated to greater moral purpose. In recent months he has stood in front of powerful audiences at the 2018 U.N. climate talks in Katowice, Poland, and the 2019 World Economic Forum at Davos, in Switzerland, to urge them into action on climate change. These kinds of events are not his chosen habitat, Attenborough tells TIME. "I would much prefer not to be a placard-carrying conservationist. My life is the natural world. But I can't not carry a placard if I see what's happening."

Attenborough and his frequent collaborators, filmmakers Alastair Fothergill and Keith Scholey, will attempt to show the world exactly what is happening on April 5, when Netflix launches *Our Planet*—a new, blockbuster eight-part documentary series that aims not just to present the majesty of the world around us but also raise awareness of what the changing climate is doing to it.

Filmed across every continent over four years, the show takes viewers from remote steppes to lush rain forest to the ocean floor. It has vertiginous ambitions in both its scope and intent. "The idea was not just to make another landmark show, but also to move the dial," says Scholey, who served as an executive producer. "Not only do we engage a large audience but also actually get to the point of changing policy that would lead to global change."

It's a show perfectly timed for a global moment in which politicians are prioritizing climate change as never before, students are skipping school to attend climate marches, and governments are attempting to rein in carbon emissions to meet Paris Agreement targets. Although he has been criticized for not speaking up



Profile

earlier, Attenborough now says that if he has the opportunity to speak truth to power, he has to take it. "It is important, and it is true, and it is happening, and it is an impending disaster," he says.

LONG BEFORE HE WAS a world-famous documentarian, Attenborough was a trailblazer in the medium of television. He went from being a junior producer at the BBC in the 1950s, making programs about "gardening and cooking and knitting," he says, to becoming one of the first controllers of BBC Two, the corporation's eclectic second flagship channel. Among his commissions was a quirky comedy-sketch show called *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. He was prouder, he recalls, of commissioning an opera by the composer Benjamin Britten.

Having studied natural sciences at the University of Cambridge, Attenborough juggled his TV duties with making wildlife films every few months; his series *Zoo Quest*, which ran from 1954 to 1963, followed the London Zoo's attempts to gather rare animals for its menagerie from West Africa, South America and Southeast Asia. "I'd go away for three months and make some programs, which was lovely," he says. "But in between, I had to do all these other things ... politics and finance and engineering, which was never my bag."

In the early 1970s, he resigned from the BBC to dedicate himself full time to wildlife filmmaking. He soon began work on *Life on Earth*, the seminal 1979 series that traced the arc of evolution from primordial ooze to *Homo sapiens*. The 13-part broadcast took viewers around the world, bringing them into close contact with a range of animals and using then cutting-edge filming techniques like the slow-motion capture of animal movements. Its most famous sequence shows Attenborough cavorting with a family of mountain gorillas in Rwanda.

But while Attenborough's filmography made him a household name in the U.K., his fame didn't immediately transfer stateside. He remembers being in a pitch session with a major U.S. network trying to describe *Life on Earth* to an executive. "I remember saying, 'We're going to start from the very beginning of the primordial oceans and see when life begins to

appear.' And he said, 'You mean the first program's all about green slime?' I said, 'Well, yes.' 'No, thank you,' he said."

This skepticism about his appeal would last for decades. When the Discovery Channel decided to broadcast *Planet Earth* in 2007, his voice-over was replaced with one by the actor Sigourney Weaver. Yet the incredible popularity of the DVD collection—carrying Attenborough's narration, it sold 2.6 million copies in its first year of release—won him a narrow yet fervent U.S. fan base. Among his admirers was President Barack Obama, who invited him to the White House in 2015 to discuss the threat of climate change in a televised interview.

Attenborough initially assumed he would be the one interviewing Obama. But he was astonished to discover the President wanted it the other way round. "I thought, I mean apart from my work, what's he doing talking to me?" he says. He desperately boned up on figures on climate change, even calling the U.K. environment ministry to check statistics.

His profile is evidently now high enough for Netflix to tout him as the narrator of *Our Planet* for English-speaking viewers (Penélope Cruz and Salma Hayek narrate for Spanish-language audiences), although he admits his creative role was mostly limited to the voice-over. He didn't travel to remote locations for the new series, focusing his efforts instead on helping producers craft a script that would suit his signature narrative style while also fulfilling the show's brief to sound the alarm about a changing planet. "In the old days I wrote every shot," he says. "These days it's a lot more ... professional."

Although *Planet Earth*, as well as his other acclaimed BBC series *Blue Planet* and *Frozen Planet*, did raise concerns among some viewers about the state of the environment, *Our Planet* is more explicit in its messaging. This is in part because the filmmakers, freed from the rigorous impartiality of the state-funded BBC, teamed up with the World Wide



1974



1986

Fund for Nature (WWF), a conservation NGO. In one jaw-dropping sequence, after thousands of Pacific walruses are forced by vanishing ice sheets to crowd on a rocky strip of land, hundreds leap off a cliff to their doom, a scene Attenborough says is "almost heartbreakingly" to watch.

Yet there are also scenes of hope that remind viewers that at least some environmental damage can be reversed. We see that Chernobyl—the Ukrainian region depopulated after a nuclear disaster in the 1980s—now has seven times more wolves than the surrounding countryside. Drone-mounted cameras show us one of the largest gatherings of humpback whales ever filmed, illustrating how marine preservation has permitted the species to bounce back from near extinction. To accompany the series, the WWF has created an online information hub so

'The question is, Are we going to be in time, and are we going to do enough? And the answer to both of those is no.'



2011



Clockwise from bottom left: Attenborough with Queen Elizabeth II; promoting his BBC show *The Tribal Eye*; with orangutans at the London Zoo; with an anesthetized polar bear in Svalbard, Norway, in *Frozen Planet*; a wild horse in Mongolia in *Our Planet*



2019

viewers can learn more about how to get involved in such efforts.

And yet even as he tries to spur action, Attenborough confesses that he has trouble staying optimistic. “The question is, Are we going to be in time, and are we going to do enough? And the answer to both of those is no,” he says. “We won’t be able to do enough to mend everything. But we can make it a darn sight better than it would be if we didn’t do anything at all.”

THE REALITY of our changing planet is something Attenborough, who has seen more of it than most people alive, has

long been aware of. For decades, he has decried the tendency of human development to crowd out natural habitats. He was present at the founding of the WWF in 1961, he says, even though he was just a “junior pipsqueak” at the time.

But it wasn’t until relatively recently that Attenborough became certain of mankind’s role in climate change. It sounds surprising given his body of work, but as he tells it, he didn’t want to base his judgment on observation alone. “It’s very dangerous to take a worldwide phenomenon and think you’re going to find just one scene in one locality that will prove it’s actually happening,” he says.

It was a 2004 presentation by the late U.S. environmental scientist Ralph Cicerone that convinced him of what was happening. “He showed a series of graphs that showed, with no doubt whatsoever, how population growth and industrial affluence had sent the content of noxious gases in the upper atmosphere,” he says. “And I had no hesitation after that.”

Still, some critics have argued that

Attenborough and his colleagues have not done enough in their films to show the devastating effect of climate change. In a column for the *Guardian* in November, for instance, the environmental writer George Monbiot attacked the veteran broadcaster for “his consistent failure to mount a coherent, truthful and effective defense of the living world he loves,” and said wildlife television “cultivates complacency, not action,” by focusing on beauty rather than destruction.

“What George does is preach to the converted,” Attenborough says in response. By contrast, he explains, television makers have to speak to a wider audience. “You cannot do every program saying the world is in danger. Because they’ll say, ‘O.K., O.K., we get the message’ and go back to listening to something else. But we can say that the natural world is a wonder and a thrill and an excitement. And that’s what we do.”

There’s evidence this approach is as capable of sparking change as outright activism. *Blue Planet II*, the 2017 BBC series that explored life deep below the ocean’s surface, inspired a groundswell of activity after its final episode showed in detail how plastics are getting into the marine food chain. At the show’s conclusion, Attenborough told the audience “the future of all life now depends on us.” The resulting public outcry helped pressure the British government to enact restrictions on single-use plastics.

“*Blue Planet II* moved the dial in this country more than anything I’ve ever seen,” says Fothergill, an executive producer on *Our Planet*. “For a long time, conservation and wildlife filmmaking was about pretty animals. Now it’s about saying that without this biodiversity there won’t be air to breathe or water to drink. It is about empowering people.”

At the age of 92, Attenborough remains committed to that mission. The BBC has announced new sequels to *Planet Earth* and *Frozen Planet*, and he says he was recently contacted about a show due to air in 2026, when he will turn 100. After seven decades in the business, Attenborough marvels at the life he’s still able to lead. “I’m very surprised I’m still employed,” he says. “But I’m just very grateful I am.” □

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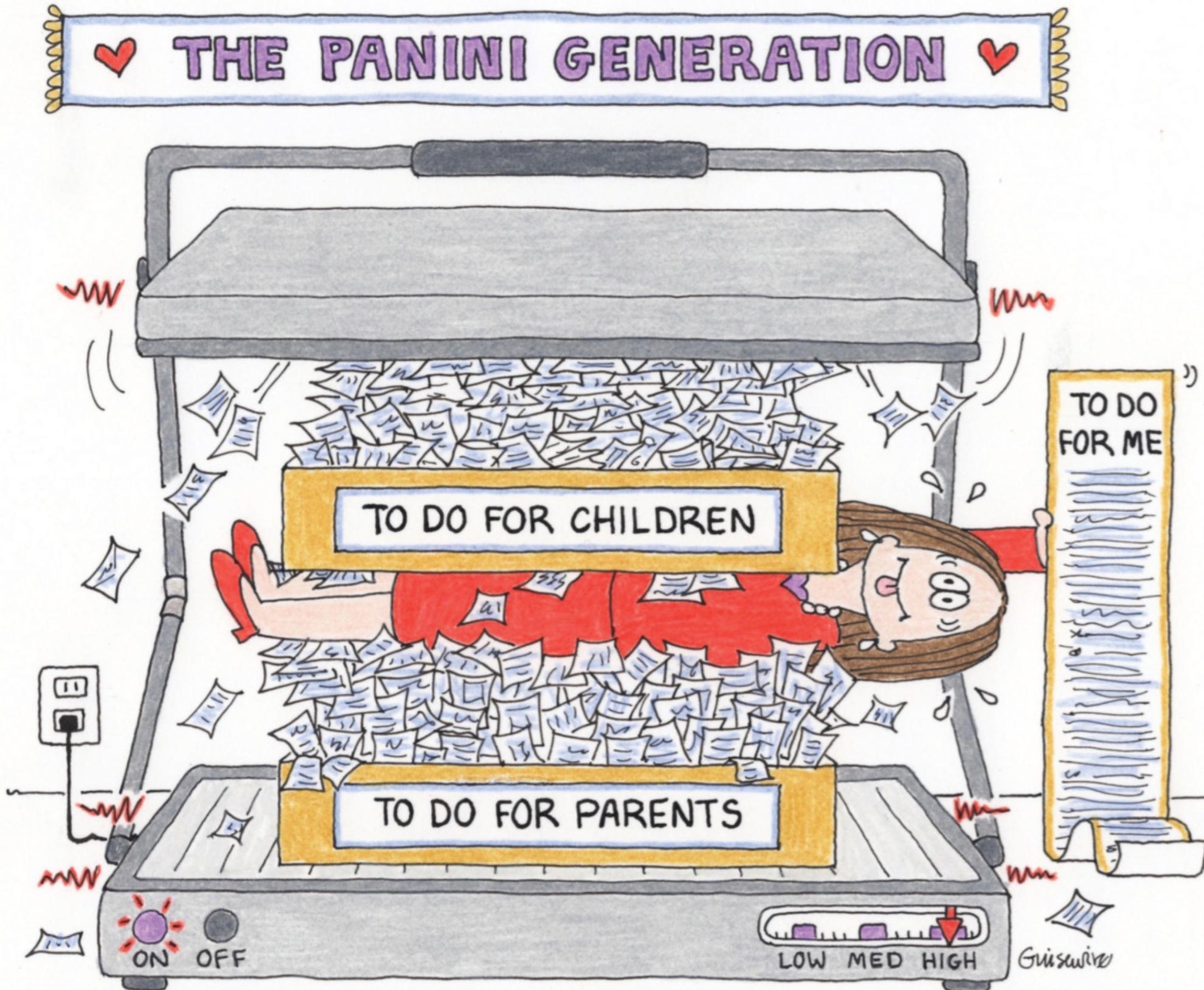
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Time Off

HARD-PRESSED
Cathy Guisewite reflects
on women squashed
between competing needs



INSIDE

A TORTURED DUMBO IS A
LIVE-ACTION MISFIRE

SLACKER VAMPIRES SULK IN FX'S
UPROARIOUS NEW COMEDY

BILLIE EILISH IS 17, BUT HER
MUSIC IS FOR GROWNUPS TOO

TimeOff Opener

BOOKS

On being everything to everyone

By Susanna Schrobisdorff

LAELY, I'VE TAKEN TO SAYING THAT MY GOAL is to luxuriate in the sweet interludes between moments of crisis. Let me warn my millennial friends now: If you have kids in your late 30s, there's a good chance you'll someday find yourself stuck at the intersection of elderly parents, erratic adolescents and the unsettling realization that you're never going to cross everything off your lists—not the home-project list, not the bucket list. Time is short. Goodbyes are frequent. You'd better get good at emotional triage. Also: You probably won't make it to the gym.

This is the territory that Cathy Guisewite, creator of the *Cathy* comic strip, explores in her new essay collection, *Fifty Things That Aren't My Fault*. She debuted cartoon Cathy in 1976, when she was one of few women writing syndicated comics, and retired her in 2010. Now Guisewite is back, reflecting on being mom to a 19-year-old and a "helicopter child" to two 90-year-olds whose safety she constantly worries about, all while coping with the indignities of aging herself. As she writes in one poignant passage: "Children moving away, loved ones leaving the earth, muscles and skin tone not even pausing to wave farewell before deserting me—and after all I've done for them."

THE FICTIONAL CATHY was on a diet pretty much from when she first appeared until the strip ended—her battles with food were legendary. Excruciatingly insecure and endearingly persistent, she was the Charlie Brown of working women, battling workplace sexism and the cruel lighting of department-store dressing rooms with equal indignation, never quite succeeding. At 68, the real Cathy is honest enough to admit that some aspects of cartoon Cathy live on. "Even with all I know and have done, I still measure my self-worth in fat grams," she writes.

But before new-wave feminists shame her for shaming herself, let's remember she's not the only woman of her generation who got trapped in the endless self-improvement loop created by the unholy convergence of the Gloria Steinem feminism of the '70s and the Jane Fonda fitness obsession of the '80s. The success of the comic, which appeared in nearly 1,400 newspapers across the world at its peak, is evidence enough of that.

Often hilarious and true, the book gets at that tension between the empowerment propaganda women are raised on and the gendered I-am-responsible-for-everyone's-well-being reality in which most of us still live. Before her father died, Guisewite shuttled from California to Florida to check on her parents as they faced down their 90s

with both increasing dependence and defiance.

She describes how she became a helicopter child, alternating with her sisters in futile attempts to get their parents into assisted living or prevent them from falling—from 3,000 miles away. Meanwhile, she struggles to connect with her daughter, who's about as receptive to her advice as her parents are. When Guisewite rushes to greet her at the airport, she becomes a "one-woman Homeland Security squad," scanning her for traces of airport germs and grooming infractions. She's horrified at herself, but Can't. Stop. Caretaking. "They call it the 'sandwich generation,'" she writes. "But it seems much more squashed than that. More like the 'panini generation.' I feel absolutely flattened some days by the pressure to be everything to everyone, including myself."

That last bit is the heart of the book's humor and pathos. Guisewite feels bad for not being able to accept self-acceptance feminism and for not following the advice of the lady gurus who tell us to take an aromatherapy bath when a crisis wave hits. She feels guilty about feeling guilty. It's "not my fault that I carry all the new guilts on top of all the old guilts," she jokes with more than a little ice. And she's right when she laments the lack of progress for women, in all caps: "IT'S NOT MY FAULT THAT THINGS THAT SHOULDN'T MATTER STILL MATTER."

There's something brave in the way she bares cringe-inducing anxieties—and it's a reminder of why *Cathy* resonated. There was an uneasy kernel of truth in her monologues on inadequacy. Those are unfashionable now, yet it's hard to imagine there isn't a little *Cathy* in girls weaned on Instagram affirmations. They've already spent more time evaluating their images than their mothers and grandmothers combined.

But when it comes to the other side of that panini press, dealing with parents losing their ability to care for themselves, she stays on the surface. Unlike *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*, cartoonist Roz Chast's searing and funny graphic memoir about her parents, Guisewite doesn't get into what happens when elderly bodies break down. In that world, the people who buy the elder diapers and take the 2 a.m. nursing-home calls are usually daughters, and often ones with consuming jobs, struggling kids or both. And neither the long baths nor the self-empowerment our culture prescribes are enough to assuage the guilt of not being able to tend to everyone.

When people ask Guisewite what she's doing in retirement, expecting some amazing second act, she says she's a full-time daughter and a full-time mother. "I can't stand all those efficient members of my peer group who are managing to care for children and parents and reinvent themselves while I end so many days with nothing crossed out except things like 'take vitamins,'" she writes, sounding a lot like her alter ego. Makes you wish cartoon *Cathy* could return as retired *Cathy*—the voice of the weary boomer woman who still can't get a break. □



'They call it the "sandwich generation." But it seems much more squashed than that.'

CATHY GUISEWITE, creator of the *Cathy* comic strip



Artist and designer Chris Rush's debut memoir is creating buzz in the literary world

MEMOIR

Coming of age in the counterculture

By Alexander Chee

THE PROFESSIONAL MEMOIR IS SO much a part of life now, we could almost forget it is also the province of the distinguished personage: someone like Chris Rush, the visual artist and designer, who has written his first memoir, *The Light Years*, about growing up in '60s and '70s counterculture, in that old-fashioned mode—the story of becoming himself—but with the features of a newer, novelistic genre.

Born into a well-to-do Catholic family in New Jersey, Rush is not just his mother's boy but a bit of her revenge on his brusque, macho father as well. The mother and son have one of the most endearing camp connections I've seen described. And while Rush's later psychedelic adventures make up many of the book's most affecting scenes, he is still, as a child, prone to saying to his mother, "I'm a yellow who wants to be an orange," and dressing in his pink satin Pucci cape, thrifted miraculously for a dollar. It's a costume that amuses one parent and horrifies the other. Rush was a trip before he ever went on a trip.

This caped rebellion launches the book's action and leads to a year in a

Catholic boys' boarding school at his father's insistence, which fails to break his queer style though it stretches his bond with his mother almost to breaking. Rush's older sister Donna, his hero—who encourages him to hitchhike, an adventure that almost costs him his life—is a muse made of mischief. Without her, he might've had less to describe of his life.

The challenge for Rush is compelling us to follow the events of that era that feel like familiar standards—the sacrament of dropping acid the first time, for example, is something we feel we know as well as our own memories, even if we've never done it. But he breaks through when he reveals that both his drug-fueled adventures and his relationship with his sexuality are really about the way he left the church but never abandoned his search for an experience of the divine that might replace it. This other story, filled with sentences lit from the inside like his paintings, allows Rush to "make it new"—any artist's imperative—in telling us the story of his life.

Chee is the author of *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel*

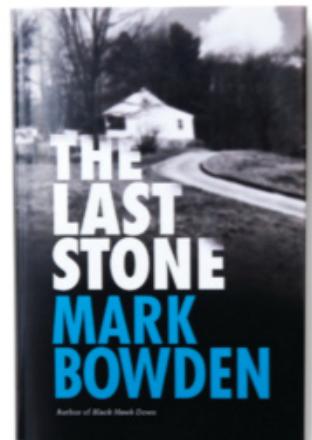
TRUE CRIME

Cold justice

With its blistering descriptions of an American special-forces operation gone wrong, Mark Bowden's 1999 nonfiction book *Black Hawk Down* made for excellent action-movie fare. The story told in his latest work, the deeply unsettling *The Last Stone*, unfolds more slowly but is no less potent. The veteran journalist turns his focus on the 1975 disappearance of two young girls from a Maryland mall, a case that soon went cold. Bowden reported on their disappearance for a local newspaper early in his career. Now, he returns more than four decades later to follow a team of detectives tasked with coaxing the truth from a new suspect: a convicted pedophile named Lloyd Welch.

The book's descent into Welch's twisted mind is not for the faint of heart—or stomach. As the detectives gradually extract the truth about the girls' fate from a web of lies, both they and the reader come to know Welch better than we might like. Bowden displays his tenacity as a reporter in his meticulous documentation of the case. But in the story of an unimaginably horrific crime, it's the detectives' unwavering determination to bring Welch to justice that offers a glimmer of hope on a long, dark journey.

—Alejandro de la Garza



Bowden revisits a cold case he covered as a reporter in the '70s

TimeOff Reviews



Green and Baby D share a rare peaceful, pain-free moment

MOVIES

An elephant suffers, and you will too

By Stephanie Zacharek

THERE'S A PECULIARLY 19TH CENTURY sensibility at work in *Dumbo*, both the 1941 Walt Disney animated version and Tim Burton's new live-action retelling. It's as if once the workhouses were abolished, we needed to find new ways to build character in children: Why not just rake over their nascent emotions by introducing them to an adorable baby elephant who's "different" and then fixating on his distress as his mother is carted away? Don't stop there: Detail every twist of his precarious existence as he's commodified and misused by people in power.

That approach was pronounced enough in the original *Dumbo*. With this update, the once great, now not-so-great Burton revamps the story for a new generation, not that this new generation asked for it. Now we've got a *Dumbo* that's cluttered with Burtonesque details—a parade of creepy clowns, a sideshow of unhappy animals—that are supposed to be edgy but just get in the way. The new *Dumbo* is ostentatious and overworked, less a work of imagination than a declaration of how imaginative Burton thinks he is.

The story opens in 1919 Sarasota,

Fla.: circus owner Max Medici (Danny DeVito, one of the movie's few saving graces) has fallen on tough times. Everything turns around, though, with the arrival of an infant pachyderm with droopy, oversize ears. These enormous flappers are considered an atrocity—until, of course, it's revealed that they enable little Dumbo to fly. Then the bad—or possibly bad—guys move in, including big-top bigwig V.A. Vandevere (Michael Keaton) and a French trapeze artist named Colette (an alluring but underserved Eva Green). Dumbo's caretakers (played by Colin Farrell, Nico Parker and Finley Hobbins) strive to protect their charge, but in the meantime, it's our job to watch him suffer.

And oh, how he suffers! Though it must be said that this new, computer-generated Dumbo, with his limp nun-veil ears and creepy, human-looking eyes, just isn't that cute. He also has wrinkly, semirealistic-looking gray skin, which is part of the problem: it's impossible to create a fake baby elephant that's cuter than the real thing. And in real life, baby elephants suffer plenty. Why invent excessive trauma even for a fictional one? □

HISTORY

Un-covered

Up through December 1941, almost all TIME covers had featured a close-cropped, solemn portrait of a man. That month, however, editors prepared something quite different: a cartoon elephant.

Two months earlier, Disney released *Dumbo* in theaters, hoping to recoup their losses following the financial failures of *Fantasia* and *Pinocchio* and a contentious animators' strike. Although the film was just 64 minutes long and made on a comparatively shoestring budget, audiences and critics alike loved the tale of the circus animal. "It is probably Disney's best all-round picture to date," TIME's review read.

The magazine's editors, hoping to release an uplifting issue for the Christmas season, commissioned artists from Disney to draw a black-and-white portrait of the elephant for the cover.



But on Dec. 7, Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor, propelling the U.S. into World War II and sending editors scrambling for the next issue. *Dumbo* was deemed too frivolous for the moment and was replaced on the Dec. 29 cover by General Douglas MacArthur.

But TIME still ran a 1,400-word story in that issue on the resilient elephant, exploring his creation and framing him as a welcome distraction and source of comfort: "Among all the grim and foreboding visages of A.D. 1941, his guileless, homely face is the face of a true man of good will." And making light of an annual tradition that continues today, they anointed him with a weighty title: "Mammal-of-the-Year."

—Andrew R. Chow

MOVIES

This Bum is the opposite of a bummer

THE BEACH BUM IS BARELY A MOVIE; it's more of a joyous squiggle adorned with a paper cocktail umbrella, a "What did I just see?" dollar-store trinket. But in these dark times, it's just the ticket. Matthew McConaughey is Moondog, a hedonist charmer and poet-genius who spends his days lolling about the Florida Keys, taking pleasure-boat excursions with topless cuties and hanging out with dolphin enthusiast and tour guide Captain Wack (Martin Lawrence, goofy and dazzling). But don't think that Moondog, flopping about in his tropical shirts, more often than not clutching a cold can of Pabst, is a loser: He's rich! Or, rather, he's married to money in the form of beloved wife Minnie (a radiant, loopy Isla Fisher), who swans about her lavish Miami digs in platforms and drifty caftans.

Moondog and Minnie adore each other, even though they lead largely separate lives. They're brought together by their daughter Heather's wedding—she's played by Stefania LaVie Owen—setting off a chain of events that, if you squint, vaguely resemble a plot.

But who needs structure? On the

surface, *The Beach Bum* is an ode to goofball decadence, though what really makes it sing is its undercurrent of melancholy tenderness. Director Harmony Korine began his career in the late 1990s making corrosive, aggressively arty films (*Gummo*, *Julien Donkey-Boy*); he busted that mold with his exuberant, enjoyably tawdry 2012 *Spring Breakers*. *The Beach Bum* throws off an even more generous light, and McConaughey is its tiki torch.

Moondog is having fun, but it's time to knuckle down and make some poems. McConaughey, his limbs as happy and loose as noodles, embodies the spirit of *intending* to work. Our haute hobo swerves about drunkenly, his most precious possessions—his books, a portable typewriter—stashed in the pillowcase slung over his

shoulder. Every once in a while he'll sit down, cross-legged, and tap out a few pages. Then it's back to partying, because life is short. *The Beach Bum* is hardly a practical instruction manual for getting things done. But McConaughey's Moondog reminds us that happiness is elusive, as fleeting as a stray breeze or a streak of sunlight.

Bottoms up.—S.Z.

'I wanted it to only be pure joy, where you can just watch a scene and laugh.'

HARMONY KORINE,
on his approach to
filmmaking, to GQ



McConaughey mugs with rapper friend Lingerie, played by none other than Snoop Dogg



Harrelson and Costner:
lawmen with a conscience

MOVIES

Bonnie and Clyde meet their match

Tracking wily outlaws Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow must have been stressful, tedious work. *The Highwaymen*, directed by John Lee Hancock (*The Blind Side*), tells that story, without skimping on the tedium. Kevin Costner and Woody Harrelson play Frank Hamer and Maney Gault, the Texas Rangers who trailed the infamous fugitives across the U.S., often missing them only by hours, before finally—with the help of local law enforcement—trapping the duo in Bienville Parish, La., gunning them down before they could fight back.

It's a great, mostly untold story and, as Hancock frames it, one with a stirring, emotionally complex ending. But for long stretches, *The Highwaymen* is just Hamer and Gault checking their map and driving from one locale to the next. (The criminals appear only briefly.) Still, Costner and Harrelson breathe life into the material. As Hamer and Gault inspect a house used by the killer lovebirds as a hideaway, Gault gently removes one of Bonnie's striped dresses from the closet, observing that she's just "an itty-bitty thing." Tiny but deadly—yet Gault finds a glimpse of her humanity in a frock. —S.Z.

TimeOff Television



Scott's journalist struggles to discern what's real and what's not

REVIEW

Jordan Peele updates *The Twilight Zone* for 2019

By Judy Berman

IT'S A MADDENINGLY FAMILIAR SCENARIO: A YOUNG BLACK man (Damson Idris) driving on a deserted road gets pulled over by a white police officer. "Just like we always talk about—no attitude, just be respectful," his mom Nina (Sanaa Lathan) anxiously reminds him from the passenger seat. Hoping to make it to his first day at a historically black college without incident, they endure the cop's casual racism. But when the officer sees an old camcorder recording, he reaches into the car and a scuffle ensues. Just as a gunshot seems inevitable, Nina hits the rewind button, and she and her son are transported back in time.

Welcome to the new *Twilight Zone*, which is very much what you'd expect from a reboot of the classic sci-fi anthology series helmed and hosted by *Get Out* mastermind Jordan Peele. (The comedian turned socially engaged filmmaker's latest hit movie, *Us*, arrived in theaters in March.) The scene shares resonant details with the stories of Sandra Bland, Philando Castile and other black victims of widely publicized police violence. Yet the episode, "Replay," isn't just about one prototypical experience of oppression. Peele's *Twilight Zone*, debuting on April 1 on subscription-only CBS All Access, is a dimension where the trauma that people—and communities—repress in order to move forward can throw the universe out of whack.

For the protagonists of these stories, the past is a festering wound. In "Nightmare at 30,000 Feet," an airplane-set vignette whose series of chilling last-minute twists rescues a plot that seems to be heading somewhere predictable, Adam Scott plays a journalist throwing himself into work too soon after a breakdown. "A Traveler" forces an indigenous Alaska state

trooper (Marika Sila) to decide whom to trust: her power-tripping white boss (Greg Kinnear) or a mysterious foreigner (Steven Yeun) who appears at the station on Christmas Eve.

Like Peele's films, the show works on multiple levels, weaving together the personal and the political to craft characters as nuanced as its themes. "The Comedian" casts Kumail Nanjiani as an inept stand-up who discovers he can get laughs by discussing people he knows; the only problem is that the people he mentions instantly cease to exist. A case study in how one partner's selfishness can eat away at a romance, the episode also functions as an astute metaphor for comedy's parasitic relationship to the comedian's life offstage. Occasionally these multitasking episodes go off the rails. But most of the time, they bend the mind and expand it at once.

WHENEVER AN OLD FRANCHISE resurfaces with updated values or more diverse personnel, some pushback is inevitable. The thing is, *The Twilight Zone*—which ran from 1959 to 1964, was rebooted in the '80s and 2000s, and set a template for the comparatively repetitive tech-dystopia scenarios of *Black Mirror*—was always a progressive show. At a time when TV offered mostly light entertainment, Rod Serling used science fiction to cloak allegories for racism, censorship, nukes. That makes Peele an ideal successor—and it's fitting that he's made the return of the repressed the central metaphor of a revival emerging amid a resurgence of authoritarianism and white supremacy in America.

'He made the greatest show of all time.'

JORDAN PEELE,
on *Twilight Zone* creator Rod Serling, to io9

What isn't ideal is the show's platform, a subscription service that capitalizes on legacy fan bases' willingness to shell out for a *Good Wife* spin-off or a new *Star Trek*. CBS reported in August that All Access had just 2.5 million subscribers—about 20% of *The Big Bang Theory*'s weekly audience. By contrast, the original *Twilight Zone* aired on CBS in an era when viewing options were very limited, and its easy accessibility was crucial to its influence. (Now, you can watch the old show on all major streaming services.) Peele's update is fresh, smart, entertaining and inspired. It's just a shame to see it relegated to such a tiny corner of the cultural conversation. □



Hader gets into character

REVIEW

The good, the bad and *Barry*

What defines us: Our intentions or our actions? That question drives HBO's wonderful *Barry* in a second season set to premiere on March 31. The titular antihero (co-creator Bill Hader, heartbreakingly decent) is a prolific Midwestern hit man who hates killing; it's just his only skill. In the darkly funny, surprisingly poignant first season, a job brought him to Gene Cousineau's (a lovably broken Henry Winkler) L.A. acting class, where he found a calling, a community and a girlfriend (Sarah Goldberg's brittle Sally). If only Barry's criminal employers had accepted his resignation.

Following the events of last year's perfectly devastating finale, Season 2 plunges Gene into crisis. Barry's efforts to keep the class going despite the teacher's breakdown lead to an assignment where he and his fellow thespians must confront a foundational trauma. Meanwhile, as the embattled Chechen mob grows desperate for his services, police are hot on Barry's trail, with help from an old cohort. It's a lot of story to pack into a half hour, but an unhurried pace, efficient character development (including a welcome focus on Sally's backstory) and the right balance of pathos and humor keep the show riveting. —J.B.

REVIEW

Staked in Staten Island

FROM NOVELS TO COMICS TO HEADLINES, the insatiable content maw that is television in the 2010s keeps sucking up dubious source material from every available medium—and movies are no exception. But don't hold that against *What We Do in the Shadows*, which has cried out for a TV adaptation since its 2014 debut. Directed by two of its stars, Jemaine Clement (*Flight of the Conchords*) and Taika Waititi (*Hunt for the Wilderpeople*), the mockumentary about slacker roommates who also happen to be vampires was like an uproarious, supernatural *Real World*.

With Clement and Waititi on board as executive producers—and on hand to write and direct some episodes—FX's same-named comedy is even more fun. Premiering on March 27, it relocates the lair from the creators' home country of New Zealand to exotic Staten Island and switches up the cast of vamps: Decadent Laszlo (Matt Berry), whose hobbies include erotic topiary sculpture, and his enchantress beloved Nadja (Natasia Demetriou) are campy twists on well-worn Gothic archetypes. Their nominal leader is Nandor the Relentless (Kayvan Novak), an out-of-touch erstwhile Ottoman warrior whose human familiar (Harvey Guillén) is desperate to be "turned."

The loose plot is set into motion when a powerful Nosferatu type visits the crew and discovers that, hundreds of years into a mission to conquer the New World, they've made zero progress. Their attempts to make up for lost time catalyze encounters with werewolves, local Staten Island politicians, live-action role-playing enthusiasts (including one played by an amusingly naive Beanie Feldstein from *Lady Bird*) and a crew of hip Manhattan bloodsuckers led by Nick Kroll. Yet *Shadows* thrives on characters and droll dialogue more than story.

In fact, what gives the show an edge over the movie is the addition of an instantly familiar new species: an "energy vampire" who drains his victims of life force without so much as breaking their skin. Day-walking milquetoast Colin Robinson (Mark Proksch, a.k.a. Nate on *The Office*) is a fount of inane factoids and a lover of pointless bureaucracy, torturing the sitting ducks at his cube-farm office with such polite threats as "Remind me to email you a Slate article on the millennial housing crisis." Nobody is more exhausting—except maybe the self-dramatizing emotional vampire (*Saturday Night Live's* Vanessa Bayer) who invades Colin's turf in one very funny episode. —J.B.



Only lovers left alive: Nadja (Demetriou) and Laszlo (Berry)

FEATURE

Billie Eilish is not just for Gen Z

By Raisa Bruner

THE PARTY HAD AN OPEN BAR, BUT BILLIE EILISH was nowhere near the free champagne. At 17, the evening's star and musical guest was a good 10 years younger than most of the hip Manhattan crowd filling the cavernous Lower East Side gallery on a February night. The occasion? The launch of her magazine cover for *Garage*, created by the renowned artist Takashi Murakami.

Eilish, a singer-songwriter beloved by Gen Z—she has 15 million Instagram followers—is not yet a household name. But with her debut album, *When We All Fall Asleep, Where Do We Go?*, out March 29, she's well on her way. Even before its release, she has nearly 6 billion streams across platforms and is Spotify's second most popular female artist this year. And she got there on the strength of an image that's equal parts enigmatic and open, and music that swings from eerie trap-pop to whisper-sweet balladry, all wrapped up in existential pain. Her refusal to conform makes her a voice of a generation that desires authenticity above all. "I don't care what you don't like about me," she says. "I care what I have to say."

EILISH—FULL NAME Billie Eilish Pirate Baird O'Connell—was raised in Los Angeles. Her actor parents homeschooled her and her older brother and co-writer Finneas. By 8, she was in the Los Angeles Children's Chorus and practicing contemporary dance. At 14, she recorded the vocals for one of her brother's songs, which they uploaded to Soundcloud. The warbling "Ocean Eyes" became a viral hit. "It was almost like a light bulb," says Darkroom Records head Justin Lubliner of hearing the song, which prompted him to help sign Eilish to his label as well as Interscope. In the three years since, she has built up a passionate online following, posting streaming numbers higher than Lady Gaga's in 2019. On *Billboard*'s Social 50 chart, she's bested only by K-pop megagroups, One Direction's Louis Tomlinson and Ariana Grande.

Part of Eilish's appeal as a Gen Z star is her attitude. In her music, she dwells on the macabre, from the strange fantasy of "Bellyache"—in which she sings from the perspective of a murderer—to the dark imagery of "Bury a Friend," which conjures a monster under her bed. In interviews and online, Eilish is frank when discussing her Tourette's syndrome and social issues she supports. Coming of age in a decade that can feel apocalyptic, she is attuned to the concept of a future on the brink. "I



▲
Eilish's debut broke records on Apple Music for users pre-padding the album to their libraries in advance of its release

really care about the world, and global warming, and animals, and how everything is ending and I feel like nobody's really realizing it," she says.

That anxiety contrasts with her too-cool-for-school image: she favors androgynous, oversize athletic apparel and a tangle of heavy chains. Her debut EP was titled *Don't Smile at Me*. Her team says the synesthetic Eilish calls the shots, from her avant-garde video concepts to tour merchandise. In one video, she cries black tears. In another, disembodied hands stab her with syringes. Britney Spears performed with a snake, but Eilish had tarantulas crawl on her face for the sake of art.

The visuals may feel opaque, but the music is arresting. In Eilish, Lubliner sees the sophistication of a seasoned artist with the emotional fervor of a teen. Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters likened her allure to that of his old band, Nirvana. Like that group and her other influences—the Strokes; Tyler, the Creator; Linkin Park—Eilish is confident in her idiosyncrasy and unbothered by public perception. "I'm fine with exactly who I am, doing exactly what I'm doing," she says. No need to bend to norms of femininity or glossy stardom.

Back at the party, while Murakami mingled, Eilish stayed hidden in a makeshift greenroom before taking the stage for a short acoustic set. On the tender ballad "When the Party's Over," she kept her eyes closed as if in a trance, then thanked her hosts and collaborators and disappeared. She did not stick around to rub shoulders. She didn't need to. □



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8 Questions

Jennifer Eberhardt The social psychologist on implicit bias and what police departments—and the rest of us—can do to overcome it

You open your new book, *Biased*, with the story of your son worrying that a fellow black passenger would blow up a plane.

Why? To show how deep implicit bias is and how it can affect everyone, even a black child. This is something that everybody has to grapple with.

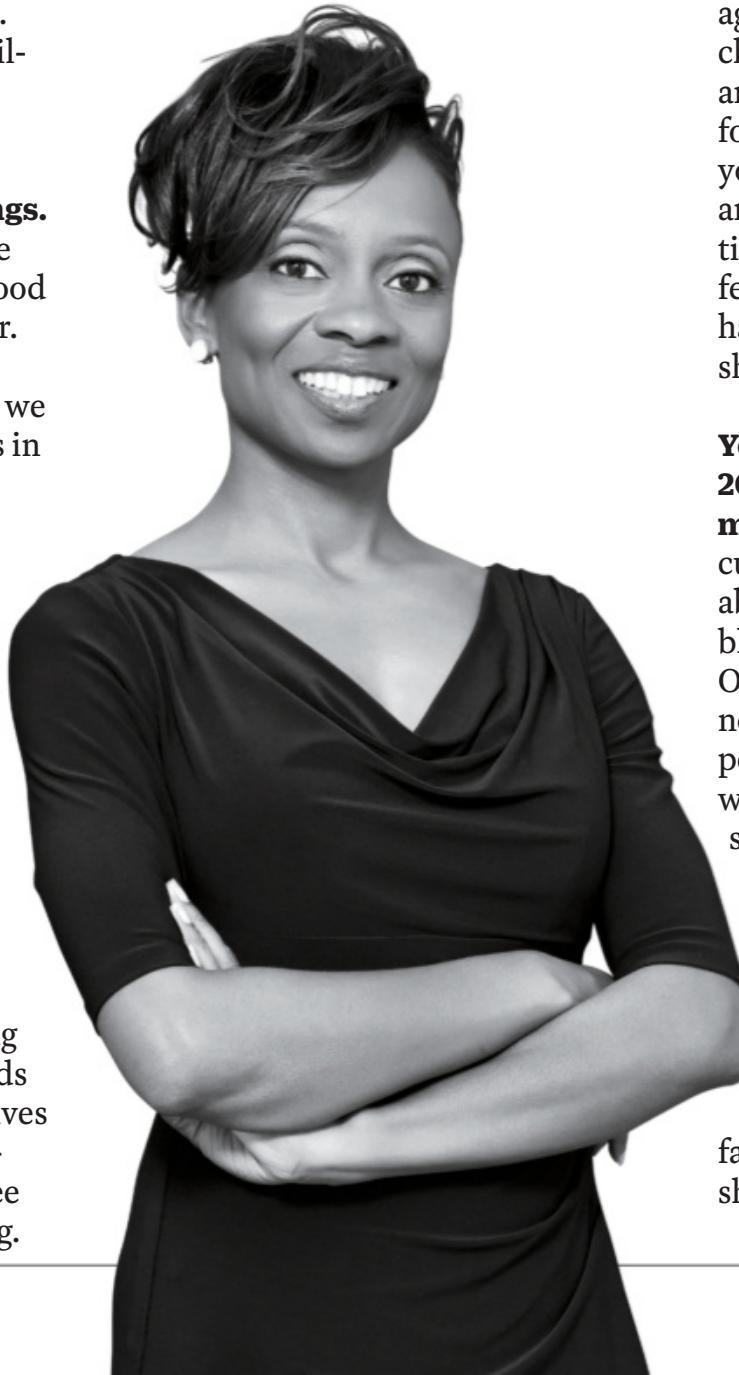
As a child you moved to a largely white school, and you couldn't tell the girls apart. I had been in really segregated spaces. I was attuned to different features, like [shades of] skin color. So it took a lot of practice in that environment before my brain was able to sort through [using hair and eye color].

How is unconscious racial bias not just racism? When people think about racism, they're thinking about bigots. But you don't have to have a moral failing to act on an implicit bias.

The brain doesn't like chaos, you write, so it works to categorize things. **How is that a precursor of bias?** The brain needs to sort everything—the food we eat, the furniture we use, whatever. We also sort people. That sorting can lead to bias; once we have categories, we have beliefs and feelings about what's in those categories.

You won a MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant for your work on bias at Stanford University. **Which study did you personally find most compelling?** There was a study where we exposed people to faces subliminally—a set of black faces and a set of white faces. We then showed them a blurry image of an object, which got more and more clear. Some were crime-related, like guns or knives, and some were cameras and staplers. We found that being exposed to black faces for milliseconds leads people to pick out guns and knives sooner. That the association of blackness with crime can affect what we see in this literal way was pretty revealing.

‘YOU DON’T HAVE TO HAVE A MORAL FAILING TO ACT ON AN IMPLICIT BIAS’



You work with police departments.

How can lab work explain police behavior? If a white person was placed in the identical situation to Philando Castile [who was shot by police after he said he had a gun], we don't know if the outcome would have been different. But in the laboratory we can create identical conditions, except for race.

Why do you resist the idea that shootings can be blamed on the racism of one particular cop? I feel like it's myopic. It could be the person was implicitly or explicitly biased. But if we're in a context where there are tense police-community interactions, we want to look at how they affected the people in that interaction. In Oakland, police changed their foot-pursuit policy about 10 years ago. If you lose sight of the person you're chasing, you're supposed to step back and set up a perimeter. Otherwise you're following them into a situation where you're trapped. You have to act quickly and you're afraid. Those are the conditions in which bias is most likely to affect decisionmaking. Oakland went from having eight or nine officer-involved shootings a year to six in two years.

You analyzed 28,000 police stops in 2013 and 2014. What surprised you most in all those interactions? Handcuffing. It was one of the issues we heard about in the community, especially for black men. We looked at the data [from Oakland], and sure enough, even when no arrest was made, 1 out of 4 black people were handcuffed. And 1 out of 15 whites. Police were seeing it as an officer-safety issue. But it's traumatic and was having an impact on the community.

What can people do about their own implicit bias? There are certain conditions under which we become more vulnerable to it: when we're thinking fast and moving fast. We can slow down and make a shift so we're less likely to act on bias.

—BELINDA LUSCOMBE

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