

Culture Wars  
Put Librarians  
On Front Lines

Combating Book Bans  
and Threats of Jail

By ELIZABETH WILLIAMSON

POST FALLS, Idaho — During 12 years as a youth librarian in northern Idaho, Denise Neujahr read to and befriended children of many backgrounds. Devout or atheist, gay or straight, all were welcome until a November evening in 2021, when about two dozen teenagers arriving at the Post Falls library for a meeting of the “Rainbow Squad” encountered a commotion at the entrance.

Members of a local church waved signs with images of hell-fire and used a bullhorn to shout Bible verses and accusations about sin and pedophile “groomers” in the library. Parents had to escort the teens inside that night, and the library beefed up security. But the next month the police arrested a protester outside the doors who was carrying a knife and a loaded gun.

In May, religious conservatives won a majority on the library board and named as its chair a member who had called the Rainbow Squad a “sex club.” Ms. Neujahr, who created the group as a program of crafts, snacks and conversation for L.G.B.T.Q. youth and their parents, said she was told the group’s funding was in danger. But she refused to disband it.

“They’re really good kids,” Ms. Neujahr said. “It just makes me so sad that they have to go through all this hate. This is not what libraries stand for.”

As America’s libraries have become noisy and sometimes dangerous new battlegrounds in the nation’s culture wars, librarians like Ms. Neujahr and their allies have moved from the stacks to the front lines. People who normally preside over hushed sanctuaries are now battling groups that demand the mass removal of books and seek to control library governance. Last year, more than 150 bills in 35 states aimed to restrict access to library materials, and to punish library workers who do not comply.

“We’re no longer seeing a parent have a conversation with a teacher or librarian about a book their child is reading,” said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, the director of the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom. “We’re seeing partisan groups demand the removal of books that they’re told are bad books, that they are not even reading, because they don’t meet the political or moral agenda.”

Activists say they are protecting children from sexually explicit material and exploitation, while conservative politicians seek to harden the bans into policy. Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation’s 900-page ideological blueprint for a potential second Trump administration, declares in

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EMIN OZMEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Ibrahim, left, and Pinar Karapirli spent nearly four months in the hospital after the disaster, which killed two of their sons last year.

In Arkansas,  
Bitcoin Mines  
Fuel a Battle

By GABRIEL J.X. DANCE

GREENBRIER, Ark. — On a sweltering July evening, the din from thousands of computers mining for Bitcoins pierced the night. Nearby, Matt Brown, a member of the Arkansas legislature, monitored the noise alongside a local magistrate.

As the two men investigated complaints about the operation, Mr. Brown said, a security guard for the mine loaded rounds into an AR-15-style assault rifle that had been stored in a car.

“He wanted to make sure that we knew he had his gun — that we knew it was loaded,” Mr. Brown, a Republican, said in an interview.

The Bitcoin outfit here, 45 minutes north of Little Rock, is one of three sites in Arkansas owned by a network of companies embroiled in tense disputes with residents, who say the noise generated by computers performing trillions of calculations per second ruins lives, lowers property values and drives away wildlife.

Scores of the operations have popped up in recent years across the United States. When a mining computer lands on numbers that Bitcoin’s algorithm accepts, the payout is currently worth about a quarter-million dollars. The more computers an operation has, the better chance of earning the payout.

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Haley’s ‘Rock’ Watches Closely.  
Well, From a Base in Djibouti.

By KEN BENSINGER and MATTHEW ROSENBERG

When Nikki Haley conceded her deflating third-place defeat in the Iowa caucuses this month, the first person she thanked was nearly 8,000 miles away.

“I want to say to my husband, who is deployed, who I know may or may not be watching this right now — Michael, I love you,” she said, standing in front of a row of American flags. “What keeps me going at night is that we sleep under the same stars.”

It was an unusually personal and almost saccharine note for a politician known for her tough exterior. But it was not out of place.

Even in his absence, Maj. Michael Haley, a National Guardsman serving a voluntary, yearlong deployment in Africa, has played an outsized role in his wife’s increasingly lonely attempt to snatch the Republican nomination from former President Donald J. Trump.

In nearly every stump speech, Ms. Haley describes her husband and his military career as one of her motives for running. She frequently refers to his struggles after returning from a war zone in her promises to improve health

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Grieving What Was Forever Lost in the Rubble

By BEN HUBBARD and SAFAK TIMUR

GAZIANTEP, Turkey — Finally, 106 days after the ambulances rushed their battered bodies to the hospital, the couple were cleared to leave.

Ibrahim Karapirli hobbled back from physical therapy on crutches to protect his aching leg. His wife, Pinar, wrangled their twin toddlers, unsure how she would care for them with her one remaining arm.

The couple were still mourning their two sons who were killed when a powerful earthquake panicked their six-story apartment building in southern Turkey before dawn last February.

Ibrahim and Pinar piled about a dozen plastic bags holding their possessions atop a wheelchair, bade the nurses goodbye and went to their car.

“God, please don’t let us end up here again,” Pinar said.

Ibrahim drove, despite a hulking plastic brace on his right leg. He was anxious to return to work and find a safe new home for his family, if it was possible for them to feel safe anywhere.

As he pulled into traffic, a Turkish pop song mourning a lost love came on the stereo.

“Day after day, I have to forget about you,” the singer crooned. “Did you think our tears were over?”

For Ibrahim, 47, Pinar, 35, and their 2½-year-old twins, Elcin and Eray, the year since the Feb. 6 earthquake has been a painful quest to cobble together a new life, piece by piece, trauma by trauma.

The 7.8-magnitude earthquake, followed by a second violent temblor hours later, was the broadest and most deadly in the region in hundreds of years. It ambushed people as they slept, killing more than 53,000 in Turkey and injuring many more, and toppling so many buildings that some areas have barely begun to recover.

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CRISTÓBAL OLIVARES FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Wildfires Engulf Chile’s Coast

Officials are warning of major destruction and loss of life in the Valparaíso region. Page A9.

N.F.L. Warns of Pitfalls of a Gambling Culture It Fully Embraces

By JENNY VRENTAS

Over the next week, the National Football League’s players, coaches, fans and executives will gather for an event that was virtually unthinkable just 10 years ago: the Super Bowl in Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the United States.

Since the Supreme Court struck down, in 2018, a federal law that effectively banned sports betting outside Nevada — a prohibition once backed by the N.F.L.’s commissioner, Roger Goodell — the N.F.L. has embraced the gambling industry. It has forged partnerships reportedly worth nearly \$1 billion over five years with sports betting companies, and permitted a sports book to operate

inside one of its stadiums. Now it even has a franchise in Las Vegas, which the league shunned for decades because any affiliation with the city was seen as a threat to the

Las Vegas Super Bowl  
Shows Mixed Signals

integrity of the game.

Yet the embedding of sports gambling so quickly into the culture of the league has resulted in jarring contradictions. The N.F.L. is pushing to popularize and benefit from sports betting while still guarding against the potential pitfalls that it long condemned. While the league donates money

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**Welcome to ‘Dalifornia’**

Young Chinese are flocking to the picturesque mountain town of Dali to escape the megacities.

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**Germany’s Russia Problem**

Despite alarms, Chancellor Olaf Scholz is wary of pushing the Kremlin, and his own ambivalent public, too far.

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NATIONAL A11-17

**Senators Reach Border Deal**

After months of talks, a bipartisan effort produced a plan to clamp down on migration and unlock aid to Ukraine, but it faces an uphill path.

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**Being Helpful Neighbors**

A group of Brooklyn parents helped three migrant families evicted from their hotel shelter find temporary homes and other assistance.

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**New Overdose Prevention Site**

The facility in Providence, R.I., also known as a safe injection center, will be the only one in the U.S. outside New York City to operate openly.

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SPORTS D1-7

**A Small-Town Phenom**

The N.B.A. hasn’t drafted a Maine native in 40 years. Cooper Flagg could change that in 2025.

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**Baseball’s Top Prospects**

With spring training around the corner, here is a 40-man roster of up-and-coming young players.

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BUSINESS B1-5

**U.S. Soft Landing Stands Out**

Economies all over the world are lowering inflation while avoiding serious recession — but because of a combination of luck and judgment, growth in the United States is notable.

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**Thin Mints Inflation**

In some parts of the United States, the cost of Girl Scout cookies will increase this year, in some cases by \$2 a box. The price had remained steady in most areas for years.

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OPINION A18-19

**Megan K. Stack**

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**Discerning Documentaries**

Some films tell the whole story, warts and all. Above, Willie Nelson, Quincy Jones and Bruce Springsteen in “The Greatest Night in Pop.”

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