

L.G.B.T.Q. in Japan

Though same-sex unions remain outlawed in Japan and bullying remains a risk for children, those who are gay, transgender or nonbinary can find their own distinctive paths. A glimpse of their lives, hopes and fears. Pages A8-9.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Bids for Votes  
Are Drowning  
7 Swing States

This article is by Adam Nagourney, Alan Blinder, Julie Bosman, Benjamin Oreskes, Mitch Smith and Jonathan Weisman.

Electronic billboards along Route 22 in eastern Pennsylvania, usually a flickering procession of ads for car dealerships, are now flashing images of Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald J. Trump. Billboards along Interstate 94 near Milwaukee feature Republican ads blaming Ms. Harris for rising prices.

In Arizona, college students are opening their phones to text messages reminding them to vote for Ms. Harris. And those watching the Raiders-Browns game on television in Nevada one recent Sunday were repeatedly interrupted by a much higher-stakes matchup: Ms. Harris versus Mr. Trump, played out in a march of political ads across their screens at almost every commercial break.

For the vast majority of voters, the presidential election is playing out at something of a distance, to be followed on television, news sites, TikTok, Instagram, X, Substack, Facebook and blogs.

But as the presidential campaign moves into its final stage, voters in just seven states are living on the campaign battlefield. They have been buried by barages of television advertisements, texts, internet pop-up banners, dinner-hour telephone calls, get-out-the-vote door-knocks, candidates swooping through remote parts of their states and tense conversations with coworkers and neighbors.

That is true in all seven of the swing states that will decide the winner of the Electoral College — Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada and Arizona — but particularly in states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Nevada, where critical Senate and House contests are also being fought. It seems as if there is a sign on every corner in Clark County, Nev., with the name of a candidate for something, from the White House to a local school board, from Congress to City Council.

“I’m a Pennsylvania native and have been through many election cycles in a state that is no stranger to high-profile competitive cam-

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Musk the Contractor vs. Musk the U.S. Adviser

This article is by Eric Lipton, David A. Fahrenthold, Aaron Krolik and Kirsten Grind.

WASHINGTON — Elon Musk’s influence over the federal government is extraordinary, and extraordinarily lucrative.

Mr. Musk’s rocket company, SpaceX, effectively dictates NASA’s launch schedule. The Defense Department relies on him to get most of its satellites to orbit. His companies were promised \$3 billion across nearly 100 different contracts last year with 17 federal agencies.

His entanglements with federal regulators are also numerous and adversarial. His companies have been targeted in at least 20 recent investigations or reviews, including over the safety of his Tesla

Conflict of Interest Seen  
If He Leads a Trump  
‘Efficiency’ Panel

cars and the environmental damage caused by his rockets.

Given Mr. Musk’s immense business footprint, he will be a major player no matter who wins the election.

But he has thrown his fortune and power behind former President Donald J. Trump and, in return, Mr. Trump has vowed to make Mr. Musk head of a new “government efficiency commission” with the power to recommend wide-ranging cuts at federal agencies and changes to rules.

That would essentially give the world’s richest man and a major government contractor the power to regulate the regulators who hold sway over his companies, amounting to a potentially enormous conflict of interest.

Through a review of court filings, regulatory dockets and government contracting data, The New York Times has compiled an accounting of Mr. Musk’s multi-pronged business arrangements with the federal government, as well as the violations, fines, consent decrees and other inquiries federal agencies have ordered against his companies. Together, they show a broad web of relationships: Instead of entering this new role as a neutral observer, Mr. Musk would be passing judgment

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JOHN TAGGART FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Stores have begun selling frightful wares earlier and earlier, a phenomenon called “holiday creep.”

How Halloween Retail Became Its Own Monster

By AIMEE ORTIZ

On Nov. 1, 1876, The New York Times declared Halloween “departed,” destined for the grave.

In 2024, consumers are expected to spend \$11.6 billion celebrating the holiday, up from \$3.3 billion in 2005. Perhaps it is time to eat some crow.

Halloween, steeped in tradition,

has transformed from a pagan feast to a celebration with lovingly homemade costumes and treats to one of the largest consumer spending holidays in the United States. Every October — or even earlier — millions of Americans are spending on costumes, decorating their homes and lawns with garish skeletons and spiders and doling out candy bars to little superheroes and witches. But how

did this holiday with humble origins become an economic juggernaut with growing global appeal?

Halloween is a marketer’s dream, said Tom Arnold, a finance professor and retail expert at the University of Richmond. It falls on the same day every year, Halloween items are largely consumable (candy needs to be replenished every year and kids outgrow cos-

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Trump Becomes the Star  
Of Harris’s Closing Pitch

Democrat Shifts Strategy, Using His Words  
to Portray Him as Unfit to Serve

This article is by Jess Bidgood, Lisa Lerer and Michael Gold.

With the presidential race a dead heat two weeks before Election Day, Vice President Kamala Harris is moving aggressively to make sure voters in the battlegrounds remember precisely why they rejected Donald J. Trump four years ago.

Gone is the euphoria of her joyful first weeks as the Democratic presidential nominee. She is no longer trying simply to diminish the former president. Now, he looms large. Literally.

“See for yourself,” she told a crowd in Ashwaubenon, Wis., on Thursday, gesturing to two large television screens installed at the rally. “Let’s roll a clip.”

The video screens lit up with a 40-second montage of Mr. Trump bragging about overturning Roe v. Wade.

As Ms. Harris stood watching like a late-night host observing the audience’s reaction, the crowd booed and then began a chant of “Lock him up.” She gently stopped them before returning to her promises to restore and protect abortion rights.

Deploying his words as her sharpest weapons, Ms. Harris is pointing to Mr. Trump’s erratic behavior and increasingly outlandish and antidemocratic statements to paint him as unfit, unstable and, above all, too dangerous for another term. It is a closing argument she is hoping will persuade the dwindling number of undecided voters to help her defeat him.

“I do believe that Donald Trump is an unserious man,” she said at a rally in Grand Rapids, Mich., on Friday. “And the consequences of him ever getting back into the White House are brutally serious.”

Ms. Harris’s pointed attacks on the former president are landing as she struggles to overtake his advantage on the economy, the issue that voters are most likely to prioritize. They have been paired with her campaign’s methodical

outreach to key constituencies that Democrats believe are repelled by Mr. Trump’s polarizing style and divisive rhetoric.

She plans to spend the coming days wooing suburban women and moderates with a series of events featuring former Representative Liz Cheney, the highest-profile Republican to endorse her candidacy. Last week, she sought to connect with Black male voters through a series of policy rollouts and interviews, as part of an effort to remind some previously Democratic supporters why they rejected Mr. Trump before.

The strategy is a return to President Biden’s original tack of amplifying Mr. Trump in order to force the contest into a referendum not on his administration, but the former president’s words and deeds. It’s a blueprint that helped drive big Democratic victories in 2018, 2020 and 2022. And his recent run of undisciplined behavior has given Ms. Harris ample material to highlight.

But it comes with a risk. Voters now view Mr. Trump slightly more favorably than they did when he left office, and surveys indicate that he is making inroads with new voters, including Black and Latino men, groups that could potentially be decisive on Election Day. His campaign has worked hard to project the impression that Mr. Trump is marching to an inevitable victory — even though nearly all available polling shows the race to be a dead heat — as it tries to push infrequent voters to the polls.

Mr. Trump’s allies say his approach, a swaggering romp through purple and blue states alike that will take him to Madison Square Garden next week, is going to work — even if they can’t quite say how or why.

“It’s like dealing with a giraffe or a panda; you can’t explain him in normal terms,” said former Speaker Newt Gingrich, a Republican. He added, “I think Trump has reason to believe that the

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Palestinian’s Dreams of Escape  
End in Flames Seen Worldwide

By BILAL SHBAIR and ERIKA SOLOMON

DEIR AL BALAH, Gaza Strip — He was the son his mother boasted about: He memorized the entire Quran as a boy, and rose to the top of his university class. He wanted to become a doctor. But most of all, Shaaban al-Dalou dreamed of escape.

Since Israel launched its devastating retaliation for the Hamas-led attack just over a year ago, Mr. al-Dalou had written impassioned pleas on social media, posted videos from his family’s small plastic tent and even launched a GoFundMe page calling out to the world for help getting out of the Gaza Strip.

Instead, the world watched him burn to death.

Mr. al-Dalou, 19, was identified by his family as the young man helplessly waving his arms, engulfed in flames, in a video that has become a symbol of the horrors of war for Gazans, trapped inside their blockaded enclave as the international community looks on.

On Oct. 14, Israel said it conducted a “precision strike” on a Hamas command center operating near Al Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al Balah, a coastal city in central Gaza. Dozens of families like the Dalous, forced to flee their homes, had set up tents in a parking lot inside the hospital compound. They had hoped that inter-



AL-DALOU FAMILY, VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shaaban al-Dalou, 19, in a photograph from his family.

national laws forbidding most attacks on medical facilities would ensure their safety.

The Israeli military said that the fire that erupted afterward was probably caused by “secondary explosions,” without specifying what that meant. It added that “the incident is under review.”

As fire consumed the Dalou family’s tent, Mr. al-Dalou’s father, Ahmed, ran back inside. He carried his young son, and then his two older daughters, out to safety. By the time he turned back, it was too late for his eldest son.

“I could see him, sitting there, he was lifting his finger and praying,” he said, referring to the Muslim shahada, a creed of faith recited upon birth and at death. “I

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INTERNATIONAL A4-10

Lining Up to Lead Oxford

This year, a particularly broad range of people have applied for the university’s chancellor role.

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Pivotal Choice for Moldovans

Voters are weighing whether to enshrine an “irreversible” commitment to abandon Russian influence.

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BUSINESS B1-6

Trust in a Man’s Method

Seth Keshel has become a darling among 2020 conspiracy theorists by factoring voter fraud claims, though dismissed, into his predictions.

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Threatening the Media

If elected, Donald J. Trump would have some influence with the federal regulators who oversee TV networks.

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OBITUARIES B7-8

Producer of Classical Music

A trained violinist, Adam Abeshouse possessed technical brilliance in the studio control room. He was 63.

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NATIONAL A11-16, 20

Awaiting Promised Visas

A program that offers immigrant victims of crime a chance to stay in the U.S. leaves many in limbo.

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A Fatal Gangway Collapse

The accident at a ferry boarding area on Sapelo Island, Ga., killed seven people and hospitalized three.

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SPORTS D1-8

N.B.A. Season Preview

A look at some of the key players and bold predictions, and an examination of why the salary cap has brought about an absence of repeat champions in recent years.

PAGES D1-6

A Wild Football Weekend

In an upset, the defense of No. 5 Georgia unleashed havoc against the offense of No. 1 Texas, while an Alabama team that is in its first season under Coach Kalen DeBoer is faltering.

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ARTS C1-6

An Architect’s Rise and Fall

Some of Paul Rudolph’s Brutalist works, praised decades ago, have been demolished. Above, the Burroughs Wellcome building in North Carolina.

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