



Danielle Meyers, 36, left, was a paramedic and firefighter in Comal County, Texas. Mike Arnold, 55, had been in ministry and had been the mayor of a small town 40 miles away. Social media posts by both created a firestorm in their rural communities.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY DESIRÉE RIOS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

## She Hated Kirk. He Resolved to Make Such People Pay.

By ELI SASLOW

BLANCO, Texas — Mike Arnold had been trying to step back from a life in politics when the first alerts lit up his phone. As the volunteer mayor of tiny Blanco, Texas, he'd been vilified for turning the holiday parade back into a Christmas parade and harassed by his fiercest critics while filling potholes. He was mocked online until a few threats began to arrive in his mailbox. Politics had become blood sport. He finished his term in May and disappeared into his family's construction business, before his phone drew him back.

"Watch this! We're at war," a friend wrote last month, and Arnold, 55, clicked on the link. He saw Charlie Kirk, a fellow Christian conservative, speaking to a crowd of stu-

## Two Strangers Caught Up in a Vicious Digital War

dents in Utah. He heard the echo of a rifle. He watched Kirk go down. Arnold had hunted enough deer to recognize a kill shot, so he began to pray not for Kirk's survival but for the country he was leaving behind.

As mayor, Arnold had warned his constituents about the decline of Christian values, the spread of indecency and the fragile "veneer of civility" holding America together. Now he believed it was fracturing. Retreat no longer seemed like an option. He went on Facebook, changed his profile picture to one of Kirk and joined the fight online.

"Time to take the gloves off," he wrote. "Enough is enough."

In the weeks since Kirk's murder, millions of Americans have engaged in an internet war, flooding one another's feeds with accusations and attacks that begin onscreen and spill into the real world in places like Blanco, a town of 2,100 in Texas Hill Country. Hundreds of people have been doxxed, fired or threatened for social media posts that were perceived as callous or celebratory in the wake of Kirk's death. A historic act of political violence has unleashed a wave of new threats, deepening the cycle of division in a nation splitting into two hostile sides.

Arnold had always conceived of himself as a peacemaker, a bridge-building conservative who was opposed to Donald J. Trump in 2016 because of the way he stoked anger

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## Cautious Dance Brought N.B.A. Back Into China

By TANIA GANGULI and MARA HVISTENDAHL

MACAU — In 2021, the casino mogul Patrick Dumont approached the N.B.A. commissioner with a brazen idea: Bring American basketball back to China.

The N.B.A.'s relationship with Beijing had been in tatters for two years, after a team executive's Twitter post in support of pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. The resulting controversy cost the league hundreds of millions of dollars. Partners pulled their sponsorships. The Chinese state broadcaster CCTV stopped showing games.

Western companies that clash so publicly with Beijing rarely have second chances. But Mr. Dumont, an executive with one of the world's most profitable casino operators, believed that the N.B.A. could get back into China through Macau, the semiautonomous city where his company ran several highly lucrative casinos.

Mr. Dumont and his family had billions at stake. Las Vegas Sands, which is owned by his mother-in-law, Miriam Adelson, and other family members, was selling its Nevada properties to focus on Asia. The Covid-19 pandemic had devastated profits. And Xi Jinping, China's top leader, was tightening control of Macau and insisting that casinos diversify beyond gambling.

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CAROLINE GUTMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A replica of a Christopher Columbus statue that in 2020 was dumped in the harbor in Baltimore.

## Scorned Columbus Statues Finding New Homes

By JULIA JACOBS

Five years after it was splattered with red paint, toppled and dragged into a lake, the bronze statue of Christopher Columbus that stood for nearly a century in a city park in Richmond, Va., has been fished out, restored and given a new home. It now gazes out at a bocce ball court outside a Sons of Italy lodge some 300 miles away in Blauvelt, N.Y.

Boston's marble Columbus statue was beheaded in 2020 — its sec-

ond decapitation. Repaired and given to the Knights of Columbus, it was moved to the garden of a nearby church, where it now stands among religious statues.

And in Baltimore, where protesters pulled down a Columbus statue in 2020 and dumped it into the Inner Harbor, the broken pieces have been retrieved and used to guide the creation of a replica.

The culture war over Columbus statues has entered a new phase. "Pretty much every October

we're going to have a different view of Columbus and therefore of the Columbus statues," said the historian Matthew Restall, who wrote "The Nine Lives of Christopher Columbus," a new biography chronicling his contentious legacy. "These are essentially living objects whose meaning is constantly shifting, and so where they are located and how we talk about them has to also be constantly changing. And that's not a bad thing."

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## Trump Pushes Black Officials From Top Jobs

### Nearly All Confirmed Appointees White

By ELISABETH BUMILLER and ERICA L. GREEN

WASHINGTON — Robert E. Primus, the first Black board chairman of the federal regulator responsible for approving railroad mergers, at first thought there was something wrong with his work phone. When he couldn't unlock it, he switched to his personal phone, only to learn that President Trump had fired him by email, effective immediately.

"I didn't see it coming at all," Mr. Primus, a Democrat, said in a recent interview. In January, the Trump administration had put a Republican in his place as the chairman of the Surface Transportation Board, which Mr. Primus saw as the president's prerogative. But he had been appointed to the independent board by Mr. Trump in his first term and expected to remain on it, as had been the longstanding practice.

Instead, he heard a White House spokesman say the day after his firing in August that he did not "align" with the president's agenda. Mr. Primus, a longtime congressional staff member and former lobbyist on transportation and national security matters, was reminded, he said, of Mr. Trump's widely condemned comment during the 2024 campaign that immigrants were taking "Black jobs."

"Maybe he felt that this job was not intended for Blacks," said Mr. Primus, 55. He acknowledged he was speculating, he said, but "it's legitimate speculation. Because if you look across the board, there is a pattern."

Mr. Primus is part of a series of firings of Black officials from high-profile positions in an overwhelmingly white administration that has banished all diversity, equity and inclusion programs across the federal government.

While there are no statistics on firings by race, an examination of the people Mr. Trump is appointing to fill those and other jobs

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### THE WEATHER

Today, strong winds, rain from a tropical storm, high 62. Tonight, cloudy, windy, bouts of rain, low 56. Tomorrow, occasional rain, windy, high 59. Weather map, Page 20.

### NEWS ANALYSIS

## Two Trumps: Peacemaker, And Avenger

### Easing Global Conflict, Targeting Foes at Home

By ERICA L. GREEN

WASHINGTON — Within a span of two hours on Thursday, President Trump won two pressure campaigns.

First, he celebrated a significant victory in his self-described goal as a peacemaker when Israel approved the first phase of his plan to end the devastating war in Gaza. Just a short time later, New York's attorney general, Letitia James, was indicted after he publicly demanded she be charged, making her the latest target of his retribution.

While Mr. Trump has sought to cast himself as a force for peace abroad, he is fueling a seemingly never-ending series of conflicts at home. The split screen has emerged as a defining element of Mr. Trump's presidency, providing ammunition to his allies and adversaries alike.

It's a dizzying dichotomy that has crystallized in images and headlines that capture Mr. Trump's dueling presidential personas over the past week.

As relieved Israelis and Palestinians danced in the streets to celebrate a cease-fire that could lead to the end of the two-year war, federal law enforcement officials and protesters clashed in the streets of American cities where Mr. Trump has deployed the military to areas led by Democrats he has railed against.

As he campaigned for the Nobel Peace Prize on his claim of brokering an end to multiple conflicts abroad, he has refused to negotiate with Democrats over health care to end the government shutdown, instead promising to inflict pain on them and their constituents.

(Mr. Trump has a history of boasting about ending multiple world conflicts — claims that, often, require some important context.)

And as Mr. Trump positioned

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**THE HOUSE** A \$137,000 home purchased for a grandniece is at the center of the indictment against Attorney General Letitia James. PAGE 19

**SOLIDARITY RALLY** At a huge gathering in Tel Aviv calling for the release of hostages, Israelis effusively praised President Trump. PAGE 9

DIANE KEATON, 1946-2025

## Quirky and Wry Scene-Stealer In Comedies and Dramas, Too

By ANITA GATES

Diane Keaton, the vibrant, sometimes unconventional, always charmingly self-deprecating actress who won an Oscar for Woody Allen's comedy "Annie Hall" and appeared in some 100 movie and television roles, an almost equal balance of them in comedies like "Sleeper" and "The First Wives Club" and dramas like "The Godfather" and "Marvin's Room," has died. She was 79.

Her death was confirmed by Dori Rath, who produced a number of Ms. Keaton's most recent films. She did not say where or when Ms. Keaton died or cite a cause.

Ms. Keaton was 31 and a veteran of eight films, most of them comedies, when she starred as the title character in "Annie Hall" (1977), a single woman in New York City with ambitions, insecurities and definite style. Annie is known for cheerful psychiatric breakthroughs, fashions that look like men's wear, questionable driving skills and lingering hints of an all-too-wholesome Midwestern upbringing.



AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Diane Keaton in 2022.

She accepted her Oscar wearing a linen jacket, two full linen skirts, a scarf over a white shirt and black string tie, and high heels with socks. In her 2014 memoir, "Then Again," she looked back on the moment, with some regret, as "my 'la-de-da' layered get-up."

"Annie Hall," which won three other Oscars including best picture, was her first major role.

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### ARTS & LEISURE

#### Return of Daniel Day-Lewis

The actor, coming out of retirement to make a movie, gave his first solo print interview in nearly a decade. PAGE 7

#### Like Oprah, but in a Basement

Kai Cenat has 19 million Twitch followers and the attention of celebrities who covet that audience. PAGE 6

### SPORTS 24-28

#### A W.N.B.A. Finals Sweep

A'ja Wilson added another chapter to a career of greatness, leading the Las Vegas Aces to their third championship in four years. PAGE 26



INTERNATIONAL 4-13

#### A Case for the Coca Leaf

Bolivia is lobbying to ease restrictions on what has been long criminalized as the raw material for cocaine. PAGE 8

#### The Writer's Russia Redux

After receiving a Nobel for recounting how the Soviet world fell apart, Svetlana Alexievich frets a revival. PAGE 4

### SUNDAY STYLES

#### Bracing to Live in a Spotlight

Rama Duwaji moved to New York to pursue a career in art, met a guy named Zohran Mamdani online, and now could become the city's first lady before her 30th birthday. PAGE 1

#### Is 'Going Viral' Dead?

Spontaneous original content, shared by people all over the world, was sometimes a path to fame and fortune and made the internet a fun place to be. But it's more complicated now. PAGE 4

### SUNDAY OPINION

#### Stephen Witt

PAGE 6



METROPOLITAN

#### Where to Find Green Spaces

The city's millions of residents are crammed together, competing for areas to live, play, work and rest. PAGE 4

### SUNDAY BUSINESS

#### Highlighting the Tech Crowd

Silicon Valley is obsessed with "Technology Business Programming Network," or "TBPn," a streaming show on which no career move is too trivial to document. PAGE 6

#### When N.F.L. Owners Unite

At their quarterly National Football League meetings, they have had a hand in most major decisions of consequence for the league as the most powerful 32-member club in sports. PAGE 1



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