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Dismantling U.S.A.I.D.
Workers on Friday removed the name of the U.S. Agency for International Development from its headquarters, which faces an uncertain future. Page 21.

Behind a School Shooting Trial, a Lawyer’s Own Grief

By J. DAVID GOODMAN
PASADENA, Texas — One day a year ago in southeast Texas, Lori Laird got a text from a friend and fellow lawyer with an unusually urgent request for help: He had clients to offload. And fast. “Do you know any Houston attorneys looking for a high-profile case with unpopular clients set to go to trial in May?” asked the other lawyer, Ron Rodgers. Unpopular was an understatement. They were the parents of a teenage gunman who had killed eight students and two teachers at

Santa Fe High School in 2018. Now, they were being sued by the victims’ parents and survivors who wanted to hold them accountable for the killings. Mr. Rodgers had closed his practice, and he needed someone to take the case off his hands. The problem was that other lawyers in town wanted nothing to do with it. “Wouldn’t touch it with a 10-foot pole,” one told him. Could Ms. Laird recommend anyone? Instead, Ms. Laird, a family law specialist with seven children who liked to fix people’s problems and enjoyed being so busy there was

With Parents on Stand, ‘That Could Be Me’

never enough time for it all, volunteered herself. “I’m in,” she said. “When can I get the documents?” What she didn’t say was just how much she understood and empathized with the parents of the gunman, perhaps more than any other lawyer could. She had a stepson, Jonathan, who had developed a form of

schizophrenia. Like them, she watched him behave in ways she could not fathom. She knew that Jonathan, who once loved family board game nights and playing the drums, had been hearing voices. Sometimes he drew pictures of the demons to match the ones in his head. What she didn’t know, even as she began meeting her new clients and filing paperwork to take over the biggest case of her career, was that Jonathan had been figuring out how to use his new 3-D printer to print a gun. *Continued on Page 24*

A Monument, A ‘Living Room’ And a Stadium

By KEN BELSON
NEW ORLEANS — Branford Marsalis has traveled the world over, but one trip back to his hometown, New Orleans, still stands out. He was visiting from Los Angeles, where he was the bandleader on “The Tonight Show” in the early 1990s, and was invited on a local talk show that was being broadcast from the Superdome. Marsalis, now 64, knew the building well. An avid sports and music fan, he saw many Saints football and Jazz basketball games there, as well as concerts and other events. He also sold programs at Saints games. The joy of those days hit him when he walked into the stadium. “As soon as I saw the field, I got overcome with all this emotion and reflexively bought season tickets,” Marsalis said. “Back when it opened, there were very few domed stadiums, and none of them looked as good as this one. It was a great place to be.” Marsalis couldn’t use his season tickets because he was living



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The Superdome is part of New Orleans’s identity, and hosts Sunday’s Super Bowl. Special Section.

in California, so he gave them to his brother and bandmates. But his impulse purchase was a reminder of how the building, which turns 50 this year, and what it represents still has a hold on him and many others with connections to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. For the past half century, the

Superdome has been best known as a sports venue. It is the home of the Saints, and also a host for Super Bowls, Final Fours, title bouts and other sports including high school and college football, baseball and soccer. Tom Brady won his first Super Bowl there, and it was where a freshman named Mi-

chael Jordan made a jump shot that clinched a national title for the North Carolina men’s basketball team. But the Superdome, with its distinctive top, covers more than 13 acres and has a quarter million square feet of space that has been *Continued on Page 14*

In Wilderness, Party Searches For a Way Out

Democrats Re-evaluate Politics of Diversity

By SHANE GOLDMACHER
The Democratic Party is having an identity crisis about identity politics. Just weeks into the Trump administration, Democrats are grappling with how to stand up for diversity and defend marginalized groups that have come under assault from the White House, without allowing their party to be defined or marginalized by those fights.

President Trump has pushed to make D.E.I. — diversity, equity and inclusion — a dirty word, racing to unravel diversity programs across the federal government at remarkable speed and claiming, baselessly, that D.E.I. efforts caused the fatal crash between a helicopter and a jet over the Potomac River. At the same time, he has made a series of aggressive moves against transgender rights, including calling gender care for trans youths “chemical and surgical mutilation,” ordering transgender women in federal prisons to be transferred to men’s prisons and banning transgender athletes from women’s sports. But Democrats are struggling to marshal an effective response. They are debating, publicly and privately, when to push back, how to push back and what, exactly, to push back on.

Some are saying that almost no instances of discrimination — especially rank racism — should go unanswered. Others are pressing the party to be more selective and engage only in cultural battles that are winnable. And still others are urging the party to avoid identity politics altogether — even when Republicans seem to be opening themselves up to a fierce counterattack. “The party is flailing,” said Rashad Robinson, who recently stepped aside after years of leading Color of Change, a progressive civil-rights group. For years, Democrats believed that they held the moral and political high ground. *Continued on Page 20*

YOUNG ENFORCERS CARRY OUT BLITZ ON BUREAUCRACY

MUSK’S ENGINEER AIDES

Pursuing Sensitive Data and Asking Workers to Justify Jobs

This article is by *Theodore Schleifer, Nicholas Nehamas, Kate Conger and Ryan Mac.*

WASHINGTON — At the end of his third week bulldozing through the federal government, Elon Musk sat down to give Vice President JD Vance a 90-minute briefing on his efforts to dismantle the bureaucracy. Mr. Musk was not alone. Invited to join him on Thursday morning in Mr. Vance’s stately ceremonial office suite in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, next to the White House, were a clutch of young aides whose presence at federal agencies has served as a harbinger of the upheaval that would follow them. Across the federal government, civil servants have witnessed the sudden intrusion in the past two weeks of these young members of the billionaire’s team, labeled the Department of Government Efficiency. As Mr. Musk traipses through Washington, bent on disruption, these aides have emerged as his enforcers, sweeping into agency headquarters with black backpacks and ambitious marching orders.

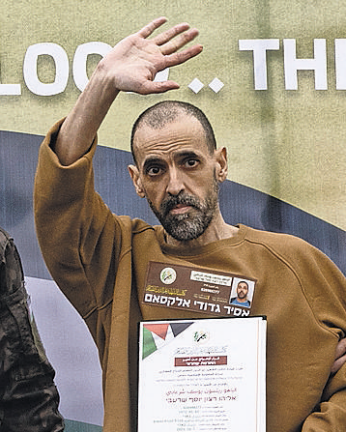
While Mr. Musk is flanked by some seasoned operatives, his dizzying blitz on the federal bureaucracy is, in practice, largely being carried out by a group of male engineers, including some recent college graduates and at least one as young as 19. Unlike their 20-something peers in Washington, who are accustomed to doing the unglamorous work ordered up by senior officials, these aides have been empowered to break the system. Of the roughly 40 people on the team, just under half of them have some previous ties to the billionaire — but many have little government experience. *Continued on Page 21*

TRACKING TRUMP A second administration has brought a dizzying rush of major policy changes, so we are keeping a day-by-day tally. PAGE 22
MUSK REBUFFED A federal judge temporarily blocked the Department of Government Efficiency’s access to some Treasury systems. PAGE 20

Hamas Makes 3 Israeli Hostages Thank Captors Before Release

By AARON BOXERMAN and FATIMA ABDULKARIM

JERUSALEM — Hamas released three Israeli hostages on Saturday in exchange for 183 Palestinians jailed by Israel, in a staged handover where rifle-toting Hamas fighters prodded their gaunt captives to give short speeches, effectively at gunpoint, thanking the militants who had held them captive for 16 months. The events made an already tenuous cease-fire more fragile, possibly endangering the next steps in the truce agreement. Israel is scheduled to pull back from part of Gaza on Sunday to allow Palestinians there to move more freely, but has threatened to take unspecified action in response to what it says are Hamas violations of the cease-fire. And talks on the second phase of the truce deal are supposed to be advancing now, amid deep consternation in the Arab world over President Trump’s proposal to move the more than two million Gazans out of the enclave and have the United States take over the territory. For Hamas, the heavily choreographed



SAHER ALGHORRA FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES
Eli Sharabi was handed over by Hamas on Saturday.

graphed hostage handover reinforced the group’s message that, despite a devastating war that killed thousands of its members, the group remains in power there, defying Israeli leaders’ vow to wipe it out. In a statement on the hostage release, Hamas said, “This confirms that our people and their resistance have the upper hand.” Hamas claims it has treated its hostages humanely. *Continued on Page 10*

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Feeling the Pinch in Serbia
The nation’s leader, battered by months of protests, is struggling to weather the biggest political crisis of his rule. PAGE 4

Class Is in Session, Barely
Ukrainian children are falling behind as war wreaks havoc on schools, with class now underground or online. PAGE 8

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Where to Find the Gossip
Emily Sundberg’s business newsletter, Feed Me, about the “spirit of enterprise,” is read by dealmakers and strivers alike. PAGE 4



SUNDAY STYLES

Persistence Could Pay Off
Can a golden retriever win at the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show? History says no, but it’s possible. PAGE 4

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Capital Improvements
Gov. Kathy Hochul of New York has proposed a \$400 million plan to revitalize Albany’s moribund downtown and reduce poverty rates. PAGE 19

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An Easygoing Wingman
Tony Roberts had an acclaimed Broadway career, but moviegoers know him as the counterpoint to Woody Allen’s neurotic heroes. He was 85. PAGE 30

SUNDAY OPINION

David French PAGE 6



ARTS & LEISURE

Ralph Macchio, Still Kicking
As the “Karate Kid” spinoff series comes to an end on Netflix, the actor will reprise his role in a new film. PAGE 12

A Feud in Front of Millions

Kendrick Lamar’s Super Bowl halftime show could feature a crowd-pleasing anthem with a bizarre backstory. PAGE 19

METROPOLITAN

Immigrants’ One-Man Lifeline
Msgr. James Kelly, a priest turned lawyer, has been helping people obtain citizenship since he moved to Brooklyn in 1960. His job has never felt more urgent, or more contentious. PAGE 1

Fewer Officers, Bigger Bills

The New York City Police Department has already blown through its overtime budget halfway through the fiscal year as departures rise and the agency struggles to recruit. PAGE 1

