



The Sani family of Kano, Nigeria, watching “Gidan Badamasi,” a show that has created discussion about the perils of large families.

Citizen of U.S. Held by Russia Recalls Ordeal

By NEIL MacFARQUHAR
WASHINGTON — Paul Whelan was in Moscow that day at the storied Metropole Hotel, getting ready for the wedding of a fellow U.S. Marine, when a longtime Russian friend, a junior officer in the frontier guards, dropped by unexpectedly. The friend handed him a thumb drive that he said contained souvenir photos and videos from a trip the two men took around Russia months earlier. Mr. Whelan pocketed the drive, when suddenly a few men in civilian clothes, some with their faces covered by balaclavas, burst into the room.

“We are with the Federal Security Service, and you are under arrest for espionage,” Mr. Whelan recalled one of them saying in English. “I have not committed espionage,” he responded. Speaking in Washington in his first lengthy newspaper interview since he was released on Aug. 1 in the largest East-West prisoner swap since the Cold War, Mr. Whelan, 54, said he thought the arrest, in late December 2018, was a prank. It wasn’t.

Within hours, he found himself locked into a 9-foot-square cell in Moscow’s notorious, high-security Lefortovo Prison, where Soviet-era political prisoners had been tortured. So began Mr. Whelan’s odyssey through what he described as Russia’s harsh, often surreal, state-manipulated criminal justice system. His ordeal lasted, by his own count, five years, seven months and five days.

At Lefortovo, he survived an emergency hernia surgery in the middle of the night at a hospital where, he said, half the overhead

Continued on Page A6

Slowing Baby Boom Means Breaking With Past

By RUTH MACLEAN
KANO, Nigeria — Five young sisters and their brother crowded around a small television in their modest cement house, a wriggling, giggling pile of skinny limbs and abandoned homework. Like families across northern Nigeria, the Sani family had been waiting all week for Thursday night to watch the latest episode of their favorite show, a comedy drama called “Gidan Badamasi.” Everyone was talking about the show last year in their suburb of Kano, Nigeria’s second-biggest city, where rows of well-behaved children sit on sidewalks every afternoon, learning the Quran by heart.

And almost everyone knew of

OLD WORLD, YOUNG AFRICA Large Families, Strained Finances

someone like the show’s feckless protagonist: a wealthy serial divorcé who had had 20 wives and so many children he had lost count — and was too stingy to support them.

The show’s theme — the consequences of having many children — has struck a chord in Nigeria. It is a pressing issue for many in Africa, where a protracted baby boom is fueling the youngest, fastest-growing population on the planet, even as birthrates plummet in richer regions. The scale of this youth boom opens up enormous potential opportunities for global influence and possibly eco-

nom ic growth, but also huge challenges for societies that need to educate and employ all of these people.

Many African women have far more children than women on other continents do: Women in Nigeria have an average of over five children, while American and European women have about 1.5, and Chinese women even fewer. And recent progress in reducing child mortality in Africa means more of them survive into adulthood than ever before.

But Africa’s birthrate is also gradually dropping: It has fallen by 38 percent over the past 60 years. That is largely because of education, economics and shifting attitudes toward family size on

Continued on Page A8



YAMIL LAGE/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

Crisis in Cuba

Power was back in parts of Havana after a nationwide blackout left Cubans frustrated. Page A11.

Maps Show Landslide Risk in Alaska, but Some Aren’t Interested

By AUSTYN GAFFNEY
KETCHIKAN, Alaska — James and Bill Montivér had just finished boxing up their home on a steep road in Ketchikan, a fishing community turned cruise ship stop in southeast Alaska, when they heard a screech like a jet engine over the sounds of pouring rain. Bill, who was scrubbing the kitchen cabinets, screamed and

dropped to the floor as the house shook. In the next room, James was thrown from the couch into the ceiling, before crashing back down. The impact dislocated his shoulder; Bill fell into the basement as the kitchen collapsed from the force of the landslide.

Both men survived the wall of mud, rocks and trees the size of shipping containers that exploded into the almost 100-year-old home they’d planned to sell three days

May Curb Development and Property Values

later. But one block away, a worker clearing storm drains died when the earth slammed his truck off the road. Up the hill, a clean brown chute like a ski slope, cloaked on both sides by hemlock and spruce was left behind.

Over the last century, landslides in the state have periodically taken out power lines or disrupted roads. But until about a decade ago, they were rarely known to rip apart homes, and they were not commonly claiming lives in southeast Alaska. From 2015 to this summer, four deadly landslides struck some of the largest towns in the sparsely populated region — Sitka, Haines,

Continued on Page A18

Harris’s Faith, In and Outside Black Church

A Life That Embodies a Pluralistic America

**By RUTH GRAHAM
and CLYDE McGRADY**

The Rev. Dr. Amos Brown was taking his usual Sunday afternoon nap in late July when a longtime congregant, Vice President Kamala Harris, called.

“Pastor, I need for you to pray for Doug, for me and for this nation,” Dr. Brown, pastor of the Third Baptist Church of San Francisco, recalled her saying. “I’ve decided to run for president.”

President Biden had announced only a few hours before that he was abandoning his reelection campaign, and he endorsed Ms. Harris almost immediately.

The prayer Dr. Brown, 83, offered was drawn from a Bible verse that Ms. Harris quotes often herself: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

That quiet moment is a rare glimpse into the private spiritual life of Ms. Harris, whose biography embodies the multifait, pluralistic and increasingly secular America she is bidding to lead. The daughter of a Hindu mother and a Christian father, she went on to marry a Jewish man in a ceremony that incorporated both Indian and Jewish traditions, according to local media reports at the time. The couple affixed a mezuzah — a small scroll in a decorative case, signifying a Jewish home — on the door post of the vice-presidential residence in 2021, a first.

Ms. Harris is a person “who has gone through what it means to be living in a multifait democracy in her own life,” said the Rev. Paul Brandeis Raushenbush, who heads Interfaith Alliance.

Ms. Harris has visited several churches in the final weeks of the election campaign. On Sunday, her 60th birthday, she made appearances at two in Georgia, coinciding with the campaign’s “Souls to the Polls” effort to turn out Black churchgoers.

Most Americans do not see either Ms. Harris or Mr. Trump as particularly religious. In a poll in September by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs, 43 percent of respondents said they thought Ms. Harris was

Continued on Page A15

MONEY RACE The Harris campaign raised \$1 billion in the three-month period that ended Sept. 30, setting a record for a quarter. PAGE A13

HOUSING WORRIES Some working-class Democratic voters in the Sun Belt say the rising costs have eroded their trust in politicians. PAGE A16

While Trump Is Serving Fries, Rival Crowds Dish Out Vitriol

By SHAWN McCREESH

FEASTERVILLE, Pa. — On Sunday afternoon, former President Donald J. Trump dropped by a McDonald’s in Bucks County, Pa. He had cooked up a

stunt to troll Vice President Kamala Harris, who has talked about

having worked at McDonald’s one summer during college. Inside the restaurant, Mr. Trump wore an apron and dropped French fries into a vat of gurgling oil. Across the street, something much unhealthier was bubbling up.

A few hundred Trump supporters were lining the shoulder of the road and holding a tailgate party in the parking lot of a strip mall right where Philadelphia ends and the suburbs begin. Another group of locals — maybe 50 people — had turned up to protest Mr. Trump’s visit. People on the two sides spent the sunny

BATTLE IS FIERCE FOR SLIVER OF PIE: UNDECIDED VOTES

HUGE LAST-DITCH HUNT

Election Could Hinge on People Who Aren’t ‘Super Political’

**By REID J. EPSTEIN
and SHANE GOLDMACHER**

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald J. Trump are carrying out a virtual house-to-house hunt for the final few voters who are still up for grabs, guided by months of painstaking research about these elusive Americans.

Inside the Delaware headquarters of Ms. Harris’s campaign, analysts have spent 18 months curating a list of which television shows and podcasts voters consume in the battleground states. Her team has assigned every voter in these states a “contactability score” from 0 to 100 to determine just how hard that person will be to reach — and who is best to deliver her closing message.

The results are guiding Ms. Harris’s media and travel schedule, as well as campaign stops by brand-name supporters. For instance, the movie star Julia Roberts and the basketball great Magic Johnson earned high marks among certain voters, so they have been deployed to swing states.

At Mr. Trump’s headquarters, in South Florida, his team recently refreshed its model of the battleground electorate and found that just 5 percent of voters were still undecided, half as many as in August. The Trump team calls them the “target persuadables” — younger, more racially diverse people with lower incomes who tend to use streaming services and social media. Mr. Trump has made appearance after appearance on those platforms, including on podcasts aimed at young men.

This furious search for a fickle sliver of the country has grown more urgent because the presidential contest is as close as any since the advent of modern polling, with the two candidates nearly deadlocked across the battleground states. The election could now ride on undecided

Continued on Page A16



NATIONAL A12-19

The Midwest Medley

From geography to values, how to define the region has taken on renewed urgency this election year. PAGE A12

Inmate’s Testimony Postponed

Robert Roberson, whose execution was delayed, had been set to appear before a Texas House panel. PAGE A19

INTERNATIONAL A4-11

Seeking Soldiers at a Concert

Men who attended a show in Kyiv of a band had their draft papers checked. Some were detained. Tickets to later events were quickly available. PAGE A4

Major Push to Protect Nature

Delegates from around the world met in Colombia for one of the largest U.N. biodiversity conferences yet. PAGE A11

SCIENCE TIMES D1-8

Unlikely Rescue Mission

In Los Angeles, street psychiatrists are offering homeless people who need help a radical step forward. PAGE D1



SPORTS B6-11

The Pride of New York

The city got its first major pro basketball title in 48 years, as the Liberty beat the Lynx in the W.N.B.A. finals. PAGE B6

Mets Run Out of Magic

The Los Angeles Dodgers ended New York’s World Series bid in a season that lasted longer than expected. PAGE B10

BUSINESS B1-5

Placing Risky Bets on China

Beijing’s steps to bolster the economy have set off a stock-buying frenzy in the country, although the strictly controlled exchanges rarely generate wealth for the general public. PAGE B1

Billionaire Eyes Newspapers

A Florida investor, David Hoffmann, has already bought 5 percent of Lee Enterprises, one of America’s largest newspaper companies. Now, he wants to control the whole thing. PAGE B1

OPINION A22-23

Marcia Chatelain

PAGE A22



ARTS C1-6

Behind the Mask Repair

At Comic Con, emergency tailors keep cosplayers in character. Above, from back, Law Asuncion making sure Mark Minutola looks just right. PAGE C6

