

Social Justice Watch 0821

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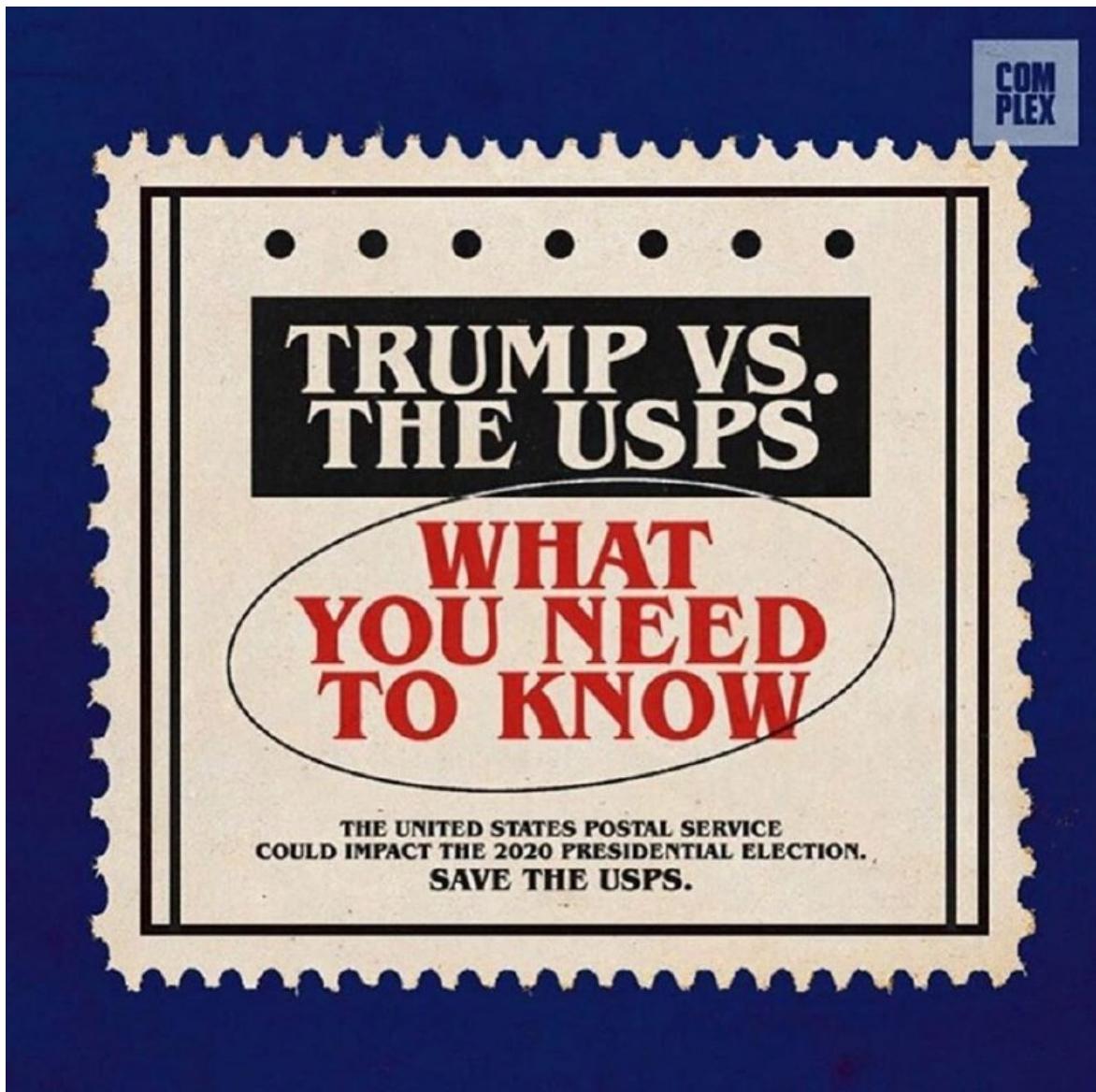
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COMPLEX

DID YOU KNOW?

- NEARLY 75% OF AMERICANS ARE ABLE TO VOTE BY MAIL IN THE 2020 ELECTION.

• AMONG THOSE WHO SAY THEY WILL VOTE BY MAIL,
81% SUPPORT BIDEN, 14% TRUMP.

- THE USPS IS ONE OF THE MOST TRUSTED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN THE COUNTRY.

- WITH THE USPS ANYONE CAN SEND A LETTER ANYWHERE IN THE US FOR 55 CENTS.

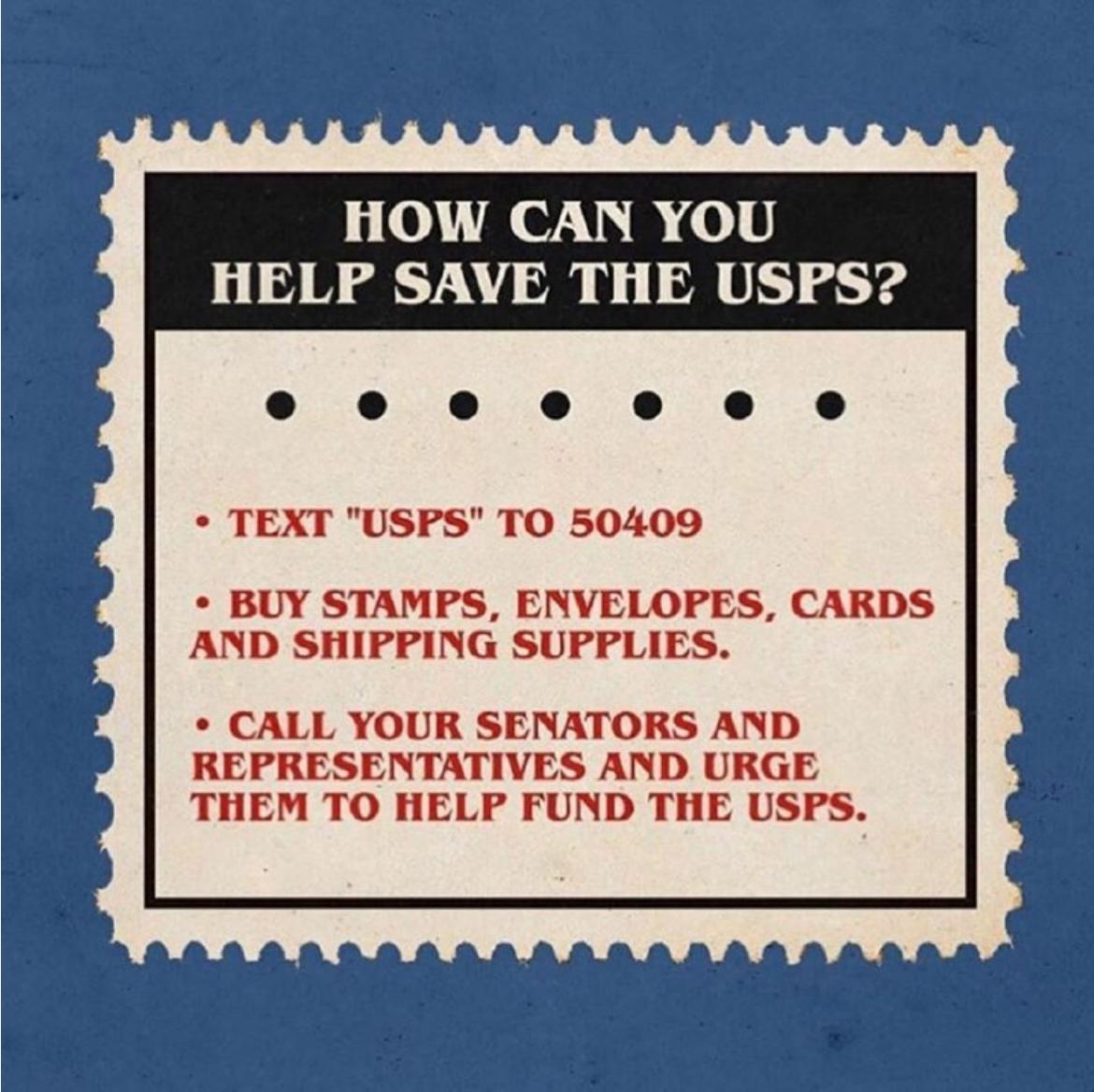
- THE POSTAL SERVICE IS ONE OF THE LARGEST EMPLOYERS OF VETERANS IN THE COUNTRY, EMPLOYING MORE THAN 97.000.

SOURCES : NEW YORK TIMES / MU LAW POLL / USPS

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

- THE CHANCES OF A FAIR ELECTION MAY DEPEND ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE USPS.
 - THE WHITE HOUSE REJECTED ANY FINANCIAL AID TO THE USPS FROM THE PANDEMIC RELIEF FUND.
 - TRUMP HAS PUSHED TO PRIVATIZE THE POSTAL SERVICE, WHICH WOULD INCREASE SHIPPING PRICES AND HURT SMALL BUSINESSES.
- "THESE CHANGES ARE HAPPENING BECAUSE THERE'S A WHITE HOUSE AGENDA TO PRIVATIZE AND SELL OFF THE PUBLIC POSTAL SERVICE."

• MARK DIMONDSTEIN, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS UNION.



HOW CAN YOU HELP SAVE THE USPS?

- TEXT "USPS" TO 50409
- BUY STAMPS, ENVELOPES, CARDS AND SHIPPING SUPPLIES.
- CALL YOUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES AND URGE THEM TO HELP FUND THE USPS.



Auschwitz 1942.
China 2020. [source](#)





SINCE THE COUP ON THE 22nd OF MAY, 2014

THAI PEOPLE have been forced to live under the control of junta government (military dictatorship).The military government has been exercising extreme and incontestable state power to silence and control us for 6 long years.

WE REFUSE TO TOLERATE THE CRUELTY & INCOMPETENCE OF THE RULINGS ANY LONGER.

Speaking up costs us a lot of things in this country. Brave activists and students who have come forward to voice their rightful critique against the junta have faced dire consequences—some were threatened, some were attacked, and some were forced to disappear. Freedom of speech and expression, our inalienable birthright, has been stolen from the people by the junta by violently cracking down on dissent, actively enforcing media censorship, and banning public gatherings.

“ WE NEED YOUR ATTENTION ”

Protests in Thailand: Thousands of Thai protestors hold up a three-finger salute as a symbol of resistance against authoritarianism in a rally at the symbolic Democracy Monument in Bangkok.



Sarah Olson
@ReadMoreScience

If you have an abortion, there's a stigma.

If you have a baby outside of marriage or as a teen, there's a stigma.

If you get married and don't have babies, there's a stigma.

It's almost like it's not about the babies, it's about judging women and controlling their decisions...

And single moms, and LGBTQ moms, and working out side the home moms, and working from home moms, and working i the home Moms.
Soooo many ways women are judged and controlled: it's Time to stop that.



Cory Booker

@CoryBooker

US Senate candidate, NJ

I miss Obama, and I miss her
husband too. [#DemConvention](#)

PEOPLE SAY THAT I'M ANTI-TRUMP.

THAT ISN'T THE REAL STORY.

I'M PRO-HUMANITY.

I'M PRO-DIVERSITY.

I'M PRO-DECENCY.

I'M PRO-EQUALITY.

I'M PRO-COMPASSION.

I'M PRO-JUSTICE.

**THAT THIS ALMOST ALWAYS LEAVES ME IN DIRECT
OPPOSITION TO THIS PRESIDENT IS SIMPLY A SAD
BY-PRODUCT.**

johnpavlovitz.com

Wall that it mattered to them. Some of those donors wrote directly to KOLFAGE that they did not have a lot of money and were skeptical about online fundraising campaigns, but they were giving what they could because they trusted KOLFAGE would keep his word about how their donations would be spent. KOLFAGE also wrote to prospective donors who raised concerns, assuring the donors in private messages that he was not being compensated.

[Steve Bannon charged with fraud in border wall campaign]

The serious side of this, though is laid out in the complaint. It's really sad. Bannon & his buddies to money from people who told them that they didn't have a lot of money to give, but that the cause was important to them. [link source](#)

[online comment] Don't know which part is sadder, poor people being scammed, or poor people devoted to pure hatred

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消息精选

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Women were explicitly targeted by stringent Sharia Law and forced to quit their jobs and studies. Virtually prisoners inside their homes, women were forbidden to leave without a male chaperone or showing any skin or hair. In Kabul, the first-floor windows of all homes were covered so that women could not be seen from the street. <https://shityoushouldcareabout.com/home/2020/8/12/the-us-taliban-peace-deal>

shit you should care about

The US -Taliban Peace Deal, COVID-19, and Women's Rights in Afghanistan — shit you should care about

Already in a precarious position due to over forty years of conflict and a delicate US-Taliban Peace agreement, women's and girls' rights are threatened in the midst of COVID-19 as it aggravates the already dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

telegra.ph/How-Queer-Women-Powered-the-Suffrage-Movement-08-18 | source

Telegraph

How Queer Women Powered the Suffrage Movement

In 1920, the suffragist Molly Dewson sat down to write a letter of congratulations to Maud Wood Park, who had just been chosen as the first president of the League of Women Voters, formed in anticipation of the passage of the 19th Amendment to help millions...

telegra.ph/Rape-survivors-say-they-are-being-stigmatised-for-not-wearing-masks-08-18-2

Telegraph

Rape survivors say they are being stigmatised for not wearing masks

Campaigners say survivors are being castigated despite fact that covering face

can trigger flashbacks and panic attacks.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told a news conference that President Trump's attacks on the U.S. Postal Service is an attack on all Americans
reut.rs/3aI7qBZ source

<https://youtu.be/ESWCzPy7SgQ>

YouTube

This Is What Life Is Like Inside Assad's Syria | VICE on HBO
Six years of civil war has left most of Syria, a country once known for its ancient cities, in ruins.

On the battlefield, Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's forces continue to fight a loose, and increasingly diminished collection of anti-government rebels....

telegra.ph/The-Verge--Uber-CEO-on-the-fight-in-California-We-cant-go-out-and-hire-50000-people-overnight-08-20

Telegraph

The Verge | Uber CEO on the fight in California: 'We can't go out and hire 50,000 people overnight'

In a podcast interview, Dara Khosrowshahi rejected the notion that Uber will hire its drivers in California In a podcast interview Wednesday, Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi rejected the notion his company is capable of employing all of its drivers in California...

<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-rise-of-modern-populism-takis-s-pappas>

TED-Ed

The rise of modern populism - Takis S. Pappas

In many democratic countries, charismatic leaders vilify political opponents, disparage institutions, and claim to be for the people. Some critics label this

approach as authoritarian or fascist, while others argue that these leaders are manipulating voters....

telegra.ph/Joe-Bidens-Stutter-and-Mine-08-21

Telegraph

Joe Biden's Stutter, and Mine

His verbal stumbles have voters worried about his mental fitness. Maybe they'd be more understanding if they knew he's still fighting a stutter.

“I’m just a regular kid, and in a short amount of time, Joe Biden made me more confident about something that’s bothered me my whole life. Joe Biden cared.”

– Brayden Harrington

A courageous kid. [source](#)

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How Queer Women Powered the Suffrage Movement

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For many suffragists, scholars have found, the freedom to choose whom and how they loved was tied deeply to the idea of voting rights.

In 1920, the suffragist Molly Dewson sat down to write a letter of congratulations to Maud Wood Park, who had just been chosen as the first president of the League of Women Voters, formed in anticipation of the passage of the 19th Amendment to help millions of women carry out their newfound right as voters.

“Partner and I have been bursting with pride and satisfaction,” she wrote.

Dewson didn't need to specify who "partner" was. Park already knew that Dewson was in a committed relationship with Polly Porter, whom she had met a decade earlier. The couple then settled down at a farm in Massachusetts (where they named their bulls after men they disliked).

Dewson "made every political decision, career decision based on how it would affect her relationship with Polly Porter," Susan Ware, a historian and the author of "Partner and I" and "Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote," said in a phone interview.

Dewson was far from the only suffragist who had romantic relationships with women. Many of the women who fought for representation were rebels living nonnormative, queer lives.

"These kinds of non-heteronormative relationships were just part and parcel of the suffrage movement," Ware said. "It's not like we are having to dig and turn up like two or three women. They're everywhere." Including among the highest echelons of the movement.

In her diary, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, an African-American writer and a suffrage field organizer, described "a thriving lesbian and bisexual subculture among Black suffragists and clubwomen," Wendy Rouse, a historian and associate professor at San Jose State University, wrote in an article published on the website of the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission. In those entries, Dunbar-Nelson wrote about the romantic and sexual experiences she had with men and women both while she was single and while she was married.



Carrie Chapman Catt, a president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), settled down with Mary Garrett Hay, a prominent suffragist in New York, after the death of Catt's second husband. Catt asked that she be buried alongside Hay (instead of either of her husbands), which she was,

at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

And Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, another NAWSA president, had a decades-long relationship with Lucy Anthony, the niece of Susan B. Anthony. Though the elder Anthony was concerned about her niece's long-term well-being, given more than a decade difference in their ages, she understood the kind of relationship she was in, said Lillian Faderman, a scholar of L.G.B.T.Q. history, who wrote the book "To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done for America — A History." Shaw "assured Susan that she would take care of Lucy forever," Faderman said in a phone interview, "and she did indeed do that."

Susan B. Anthony herself had relationships with women, Faderman said. Anthony wrote romantic letters to the suffragist Anna Elizabeth Dickinson and had a long relationship with Emily Gross. Faderman found letters — one to a relative, another to a close friend — in which Anthony refers to Gross as her lover. Lover was a term used for an admirer, but not in Anthony's vocabulary, Faderman said.

Today, we have many terms for romantic relationships between women: lesbian, bisexual, same-sex and queer, among others. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, they were sometimes called "romantic friendships" or Boston marriages, which Faderman described as "long-term domestic relationships between two women who were financially independent thinkers."

When the history of the 19th Amendment is taught in classrooms, suffragists are often depicted as boring, chaste and dowdy, and their campaign is rarely framed as a major social and political movement. But as greater attention is starting to be paid to suffrage history, and to the roles of Black and brown women, the narrative that is emerging is much more varied. This broader, more accurate picture is also increasing our understanding of queerness in the movement. Rouse, who is among scholars working to "queer the suffrage movement" — which she described as "deconstructing the dominant narrative that has focused on the stories of elite, white, upper-class suffragists" — uses "queer" as an umbrella term to describe suffragists who challenged gender and sexual norms in their everyday lives.

They did this by choosing not to marry, for example, or by living a life outside the rigid expectations placed on women in other ways. The suffragist Gail Laughlin demanded that pockets be sewn into her dresses, a radical request at the

time.

Belle Squire, a suffragist from Illinois, “not only wanted the vote, she wanted to smash what we now call ‘the patriarchy,’” Rouse wrote in her article. In 1910, inspired by Squire and her No Vote, No Tax League, thousands of women refused to pay their taxes until women were granted the right to vote. Squire also publicly declared her refusal to marry, “a bold statement against the oppression of women,” Rouse wrote. And, demanding the same respect as married women, she insisted on being called Mrs. Squire, not Miss Squire.

Of course, the reality of living as an outlier wasn’t exactly rosy, especially for women in the working class or women with a more masculine presentation. In her research, Faderman found several instances in which a sex toy was found in the possession of women, a discovery that she said was “certainly frowned upon.” Those women, especially if they were of a lower social status, “were sentenced to jail” or “sentenced to be publicly whipped.”

The societal expectation that middle- and upper-class white women would marry men created a smoke screen of sorts. “I think that the world outside didn’t speculate about the possibilities of a sexual relationship between” women, Faderman said, adding that parents were probably relieved to learn that their daughter had an intense relationship with a female friend, and not a man, before marriage.

In a way, this smoke screen extended to detractors of the movement, known as anti-suffragists. Anti-suffragists already viewed suffragists as abnormal for wanting equal rights, and they pointed to gender-nonconforming suffragists as evidence that the movement was deviant. They argued that these women would reject marriage, family and the home, and they feared women would adopt men’s clothes and assume male privileges, Rouse said in an email. But somehow they didn’t latch onto the fact that many of these women were having romantic relationships with each other.

This oversight was in part because same-sex relationships didn’t start to be pathologized until the early 20th century, and because, as Ware put it, “Women are kind of invisible, period.” But maybe most of all, it was because the suffrage movement itself downplayed the queerness within it, Rouse said, a defensive strategy that contributed to the erasure of queer suffragists.

Leaders of the movement (including Shaw and Catt) opted instead to present a version “palatable to the mainstream,” Rouse said, by emphasizing normalcy. So suffragists who were seemingly happily married wives and mothers — or young, beautiful and affluent, a.k.a. marriage material — became the faces of the movement.

Despite this internal friction and these fraught side effects, it ultimately made practical sense that queer women would be at the forefront of the movement. Married women of the day often had children, and mothers didn’t have time to lead a movement, Faderman said. “But the women who didn’t have kids, they did have time to lead.”

For these queer women, the freedom to choose whom and how they loved was tied deeply to the idea of voting rights.

“They knew they would have no man to represent them,” Faderman said, echoing a common refrain among married women who were not suffragists: “My husband votes for me. He votes for the family.” But unmarried or gay women knew that would not be the case for them, she said, and so, “they needed to get the vote for themselves.”

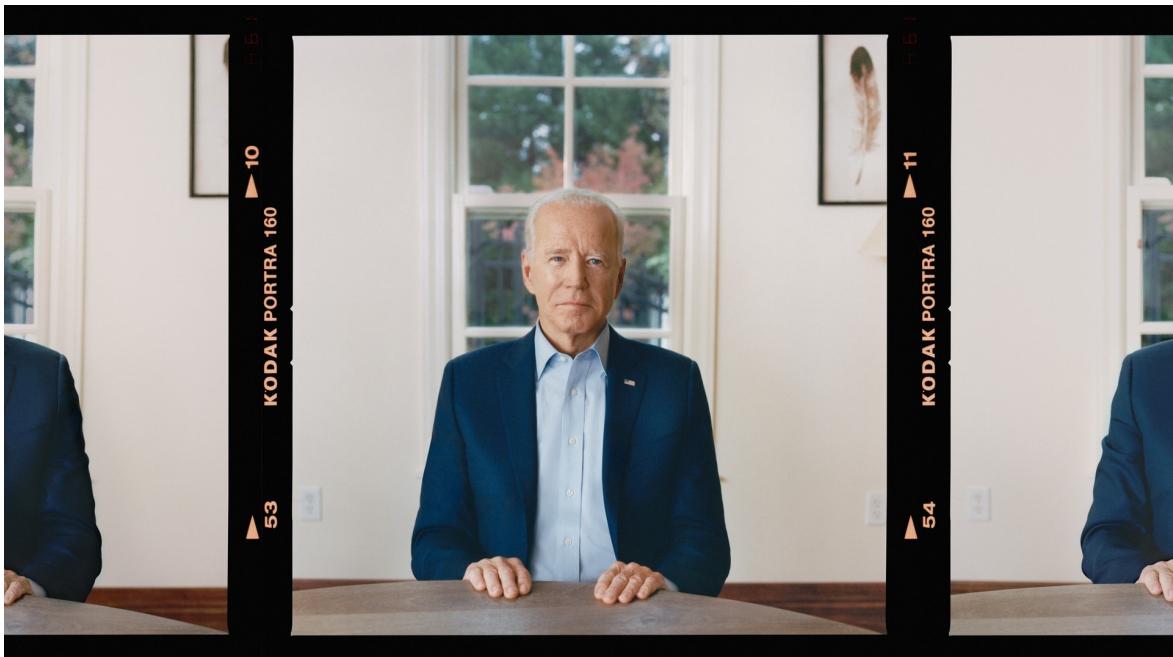
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Joe Biden's Stutter, and Mine

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His verbal stumbles have voters worried about his mental fitness. Maybe they'd be more understanding if they knew he's still fighting a stutter.



Mark Peckmezian

His eyes fall to the floor when I ask him to describe it. We've been tiptoeing toward it for 45 minutes, and so far, every time he seems close, he backs away, or leads us in a new direction. There are competing theories in the press, but Joe Biden has kept mum on the subject. I want to hear him explain it. I ask him to walk me through the night he appeared to lose control of his words onstage.

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"I—um—I don't remember," Biden says. His voice has that familiar shake, the creak and the croak. "I'd have to see it. I-I-I don't remember."

We're in Biden's mostly vacant Washington, D.C., campaign office on an overcast Tuesday at the end of the summer. Since entering the Democratic presidential-primary race in April, Biden has largely avoided in-depth interviews. When I first reached out, in late June, his press person was polite but noncommittal: Was an interview really necessary for the story?

Then came the second debate, at the end of July, in Detroit. The first one, a month earlier, had been a disaster for Biden. He was unprepared when Senator Kamala Harris criticized both his past resistance to federally mandated busing and a recent speech in which he'd waxed fondly about collaborating with segregationist senators. Some of his answers that night had been meandering and

difficult to parse, feeding into the narrative that he wasn't just prone to verbal slipups—he's called himself a "gaffe machine"—but that his age was a problem, that he was confused and out of touch.

Detroit was Biden's chance to regain control of the narrative. And then something else happened. The candidates were talking about health care. At first, Biden sounded strong, confident, presidential: "My plan makes a limit of co-pay to be One. Thousand. Dollars. Because we—"

He stopped. He pinched his eyes closed. He lifted his hands and thrust them forward, as if trying to pull the missing sound from his mouth. "We f-f-f-f-further

support—" He opened his eyes. "The uh-uh-uh-uh—" His chin dipped toward his chest. "The-uh, the ability to buy into the Obamacare plan." Biden also stumbled when trying to say *immune system*.

Fox News edited these moments into a mini montage. Stifling laughter, the host Steve Hilton narrated: "As the right words struggled to make that perilous journey from Joe Biden's brain to Joe Biden's mouth, half the time he just seemed to give up with this somewhat tragic and limp admission of defeat."

Several days later, Biden's team got back in touch with me. One of his aides gingerly asked whether I'd noticed the former vice president stutter during the debate. Of course I had—I stutter, far worse than Biden. The aide said he was ready to talk about it. In November, after Biden stumbled multiple times during a debate in Atlanta, the topic would become even more relevant.

"So how are you, man?"

Biden is in his usual white button-down and navy suit, a flag pin on the left lapel. Up close, he looks like he's lost weight since leaving office in 2017. His height is commanding, but, as he approaches his 77th birthday, he doesn't fill out his suit jacket like he used to.

I stutter as I begin to ask my first question. "I've only ... told a few people I'm ... d-doing this piece. Every time I ... describe it, I get ... caught on the w-word-uh *stuh-tuh-tuh-tutter*."

"So did I," Biden replies. "It doesn't"—he interrupts himself—"can't define who you are."



Mark Peckmezian

Maybe you've heard Biden talk about his boyhood stutter. A non-stutterer might not notice when he appears to get caught on words as an adult, because he usually maneuvers out of those moments quickly and expertly. But on other occasions, like that night in Detroit, Biden's lingering stutter is hard to miss. He stutters—if slightly—on several sounds as we sit across from each other in his office. Before addressing the debate specifically, I mention what I've just heard. “I want to ask you, as, you know, a … stutterer to, uh, to a … stutterer. When you were … talking a couple minutes ago, it, it seemed to … my ear, my eye … did you have … trouble on s? Or on … m?”

Biden looks down. He pivots to the distant past, telling me that the letter *s* was hard when he was a kid. “But, you know, I haven’t stuttered in so long that it’s hhhhard for me to remember the specific—” He pauses. “What I do remember is the feeling.”

I started stuttering at age 4.

I still struggle to say my own name. When I called the gas company recently, the automated voice apologized for not being able to understand me. This happens a lot, so I try to say “representative,” but *r*’s are tough too. When I reach a human, I’m inevitably asked whether we have a poor connection. Busy bartenders will walk away and serve someone else when I take too long to say the name of a beer. Almost every deli guy chuckles as I fail to enunciate my order, despite the fact that I’ve cut it down to just six words: “Turkey club, white toast, easy mayo.” I used to just point at items on the menu.

My head will shake on a really bad stutter. People have casually asked whether I have Parkinson’s. I curl my toes inside my shoes or tap my foot as a distraction to help me get out of it, a behavior that I’ve repeated so often, it’s become a tic. Sometimes I shuffle a pen between my hands. When I was little, I used to press my palm against my forehead in an effort to force the missing word out of my brain. Back then, my older brother would imitate this motion and the accompanying sound, a dull whine—something between a cow and a sheep. A kid at baseball camp, Michael, referred to me as “Stutter Boy.” He’d snap his fingers and repeat it as if calling a dog. “Stutter Boy! Stutter Boy!” In college, I applied for a job at a coffee shop. I stuttered horribly through the interview, and the owner told me he couldn’t hire me, because he wanted his café to be “a place where customers feel comfortable.”

Stuttering is a neurological disorder that affects roughly 70 million people, about 3 million of whom live in the United States. It has a strong genetic component: Two-thirds of stutterers have a family member who actively stutters or used to. Biden’s uncle on his mother’s side—“Uncle Boo-Boo,” as he was called—stuttered his whole life.

In the most basic sense, a stutter is a repetition, prolongation, or block in producing a sound. It typically presents between the ages of 2 and 4, in up to twice as many boys as girls, who also have a higher recovery rate. During the developmental years, some children’s stutter will disappear completely without

intervention or with speech therapy. The longer someone stutters, however, the lower the chances of a full recovery—perhaps due to the decreasing plasticity of the brain. Research suggests that no more than a quarter of people who still stutter at 10 will completely rid themselves of the affliction as adults.

“Mr. Buh-Buh-Buh-Biden, what’s that word?,” a nun asked Joe Biden in front of his seventh-grade classmates.

The cultural perception of stutterers is that they’re fearful, anxious people, or simply dumb, and that stuttering is the result. But it doesn’t work like that. Let’s say you’re in fourth grade and you have to stand up and recite state capitals. You know that Juneau is the capital of Alaska, but you also know that you almost always block on the *j* sound. You become intensely anxious not because you don’t know the answer, but because you *do* know the answer, and you know you’re going to stutter on it.

Stuttering can feel like a series of betrayals. Your body betrays you when it refuses to work in concert with your brain to produce smooth speech. Your brain betrays you when it fails to recall the solutions you practiced after school with a speech therapist, allegedly in private, later learning that your mom was on the other side of a mirror, watching in the dark like a detective. If you’re a lucky stutterer, you have friends and family who build you back up, but sometimes your protectors betray you too.

A Catholic nun betrayed Biden when he was in seventh grade. “I think I was No. 5 in alphabetical order,” Biden says. He points over my right shoulder and stares into the middle distance as the movie rolls in his mind. “We’d sit along the radiators by the window.”

The office we’re in is awash in framed memories: Biden and his family, Biden and Barack Obama, Biden in a denim shirt posing for *InStyle*. The shelf behind the desk features, among other books, Jon Meacham’s *The Soul of America*. It’s a phrase Biden has adopted for his campaign this time around, his third attempt at the presidency. In almost every speech, Biden warns potential voters that 2020 is not merely an election, but a battle “for the soul of America.” Sometimes he swaps in *nation*.

Joe Biden: ‘We are living through a battle for the soul of this nation’

But now we’re back in middle school. The students are taking turns reading a

book, one by one, up and down the rows. “I could count down how many paragraphs, and I’d memorize it, because I found it easier to memorize than look at the page and read the word. I’d *pretend* to be reading,” Biden says. “You learned early on who the hell the bullies were,” he tells me later. “You could tell by the look, couldn’t you?”

For most stutterers, reading out loud summons peak dread. A chunk of text that may take a fluent person roughly a minute to read could take a stutterer five or 10 times as long. *Four kids away, three kids away.* Your shoulders tighten. *Two away.* The back of your neck catches fire. *One away.* Then it happens, and the room fills with secondhand embarrassment. Someone breathes a heavy sigh. Someone else laughs. At least one kid mimics your stutter while you’re actively stuttering. You never talk about it. At night, you stare at the ceiling above your bed, reliving it.

“The paragraph I had to read was: ‘Sir Walter Raleigh was a gentleman. He laid his cloak upon the muddy road suh-suh-so the lady wouldn’t soil her shoes when she entered the carriage,’” Biden tells me, slightly and unintentionally tripping up on the word *so*. “And I said, ‘Sir Walter Raleigh was a gentle *man* who—’ and then the nun said, ‘Mr. Biden, what is that word?’ And it was *gentleman* that she wanted me to say, not *gentle man*. And she said, ‘Mr. Buh-Buh-Buh-Biden, what’s that word?’”

Biden says he rose from his desk and left the classroom in protest, then walked home. The family story is that his mother, Jean, drove him back to school and confronted the nun with the made-for-TV phrase “You do that again, I’ll knock your bonnet off your head!” I ask Biden what went through his mind as the nun mocked him.

“Anger, rage, humiliation,” he says. His speech becomes staccato. “A feeling of, uh—like I’m sure you’ve experienced—it just drops out of your chest, just, like, you feel … a void.” He lifts his hands up to his face like he did on the debate stage in July, to guide the *v* sound out of his mouth: *void*.

By all accounts, Biden was both popular and a strong athlete in high school. He was class president at Archmere Academy, in Claymont, Delaware. His nickname was “Dash”—not a reference to his speed on the football field, but rather another way to mock his stutter. “It was like Morse code—*dot dot dot, dash dash dash dash*,” Biden says. “Even though by that time I started to

overcome it.”

I ask him to expand on the relationship between anger and humiliation, or shame.

“Shame is a big piece of it,” he says, then segues into a story about meeting a stutterer while campaigning.

I bring it back up a little later, this time more directly: “When have you felt shame?”

“Not for a long, long, long time. But especially when I was in grade school and high school. Because that’s the time when everything is, you know, it’s rough. They talk about ‘mean girls’? There’s mean boys, too.”

Bill Bowden had the locker next to Biden’s at Archmere. I called Bowden recently. “It was just kind of a funny thing, you know?” he told me. “Hopefully he wasn’t hurt by it.” Bob Markel, another high-school buddy of Biden’s, went a little further when we spoke: “‘H-H-H-H-Hey, J-J-J-J-J-Joe B-B-B-B-Biden’—that’s how he’d be addressed.” Markel said the Archmere guys called him “Stutterhead,” or “Hey, *Stut!*” for short. He fears that he himself may have made fun of Biden once or twice. “I never remember him being offended. He probably was,” Markel said. “I think one of his coping mechanisms was to not show it.” Bowden and Markel have remained friends with Biden to this day.

Before collecting from customers on his paper route, Biden would preplay conversations in his mind, banking lines—a tactic he still sometimes uses on the campaign trail, he says. “I knew the one guy loved the Phillies. And he’d asked me about them all the time. And I knew another person would ask me about my sister, so I would practice an answer.”

After trying and failing at speech therapy in kindergarten, Biden waged a personal war on his stutter in his bedroom as a young teen. He’d hold a flashlight to his face in front of his bedroom mirror and recite Yeats and Emerson with attention to rhythm, searching for that elusive control. He still knows the lines by heart: “Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.”

Biden performs the passage for me with total fluency, knowing where and when to pause, knowing how many words he can say before needing a breath. This is what stutterers learn to do: reclaim control of their airflow; think in full phrases, not individual words. I ask Biden what his moment of dread used to be in that essay.

“Well, looking back on it, ‘Meek young men grow up in li-li-libraries,’” he begins again. “‘Li’—the *l*.”

“That kind of sound, the *l* sound, is like the … *r* sound,” I say.

“Yes.”

“Sometimes I’ve noticed, watching old clips, it looks like you do have a little trouble on the *r*. It’s your middle initial.”

“Yeah.”

“Like ‘ruh-ruh-ruh-remember,’” I say, intentionally stuttering on the *r*.

“Well, I may. I-I-I-I-I haven’t thought I have. But I-I-I-I don’t doubt there’s probably ways people could pick up that there’s something. But I don’t consciously think of it anymore.”

Biden says he hasn’t felt himself caught in a traditional stutter in several decades. “I mean, I can’t remember a time where I’ve ever worried before a crowd of 80,000 people or 800 people or 80 people—I haven’t had that feeling of dread since, I guess, speech class in college,” he says, referring to an undergraduate public-speaking course at the University of Delaware.

This is when I ask him what happened that night in Detroit.

After saying he doesn’t remember, Biden opines: “I’m everybody’s target; they have to take me down. And so, what I found is—not anymore—I’ve found that it’s difficult to deal with some of the criticism, based on the nature of the person directing the criticism. It’s awful hard to be, to respond the same way in a national debate—especially when you’re, you know, the guy who is characterized as the white-guy-of-privilege kind of thing—to turn and say to someone who says, ‘I’m not saying you’re a racist, but …’ and know you’re being set up. So I have to admit to you, I found my mind going, *What the hell?*

How do I respond to that? Because I know she's being completely unfair."

I eventually realize that he's describing the moment from the *first* debate, when Harris criticized his record on race.

"These aren't debates," he continues. "These are one-minute assertions. And I don't think there's anybody who hasn't been taking shots at me, which is okay. I'm a big boy, don't get me wrong."

Listening back to that part of the conversation after our interview made me feel dizzy. I can only speculate as to why Biden's campaign agreed to this interview, but I assume the reasoning went something like this: If Biden disclosed to me, a person who stutters, that he himself still actively stutters, perhaps voters would cut him some slack when it comes to verbal misfires, as well as errors that seem more related to memory and cognition. But whenever I asked Biden about what appeared to be his present-day stuttering, the notably verbose candidate became clipped, or said he didn't remember, or spun off to somewhere new.

I wondered if I reminded Biden of his old self, a ghost from his youth, the stutterer he used to be. He and I are about the same height. We happened to be wearing the exact same outfit that day: navy suit, white shirt, no tie. We both went to all-male prep schools, the sort of place where displaying any weakness is a liability.

As I listened to the recording of our interview, I remembered how I used to respond when people asked me about my stutter. I'd shut down. I'd try to change the subject. I'd almost always look away.

In early September, I got in touch with my high-school speech pathologist, Joseph Donaher, who practices at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. I hadn't heard Donaher's voice for almost 15 years. Immediately, I was transported back to the little windowless room in the hospital where we used to meet. Donaher was the first therapist—really the first person—who ever leveled with me. I can still see his face, the neutrality in his eyes on the day he looked at me square and said the sentence my friends and parents had avoided saying my entire life: *You have a severe stutter.*

Donaher and his colleagues try to help their patients open up about the shame and low self-worth that accompany stuttering. Instead of focusing solely on mechanics, or on the ability to communicate, they first build up the *desire* to

communicate at all. They then share techniques such as elongating vowels and lightly approaching hard-consonant clusters, meaning just touching on the first sound in a word like *stutter*—the *st*—to keep the mouth and throat from tensing up and interfering with speech. The goal isn’t to be totally fluent but, simply put, to stutter better.

This evolution in treatment has been accompanied by a new movement to destigmatize the disorder, similar to the drive to view autism through a lens of “neurodiversity” rather than as a pathology. The idea is to accept, even embrace, one’s stutter. There are practical reasons for this: Research shows, according to Donaher, that the simple disclosure “I stutter” benefits both the stutterer and the listener—the former gets to explain what’s happening and ease the awkward tension so the latter isn’t stuck wondering what’s “wrong” with this person. Saying those two words is harder than it seems. “I’m working with people who spend their whole lives and are never able to disclose it,” Donaher told me.

Biden says his father taught him about “shouldering burdens with grace.” Specifically, he told his son, “Never complain. Never explain.”

Eric S. Jackson, an assistant professor of communicative sciences and disorders at NYU, told me he believes that Biden’s eye movements—the blinks, the downward glances—are part of his ongoing efforts to manage his stutter. “As kids we figure out: *Oh, if I move parts of my body not associated with the speech system, sometimes it helps me get through these blocks faster,*” Jackson, a stutterer himself, explained. Jackson credits an intensive program at the American Institute for Stuttering, in Manhattan, with bringing him back from a “rock bottom” period in his mid-20s, when he says his stutter kept him from meeting women or speaking up enough to reach his professional goals.

Afterward, Jackson went all in on disclosure: Every day for six months, he stood up during the subway ride to and from work and announced that he was a person who stutters. “I had this new relationship with my stuttering—I was like Hercules,” he told me. At 41, Jackson still stutters, but in conversation he confidently maintains eye contact and appears relaxed. He wishes Biden would be more transparent about his intermittent disfluency. “Running for president is essentially the biggest stage in the world. For him to come out and say ‘I still stutter and it’s fine’ would be an amazing, empowering message.”

Occasionally, Biden has used present-tense verbs when discussing his stutter. “I find myself, when I’m tired, cuh-cuh-catching myself, like that,” he said during a

2016 American Institute for Stuttering speech. Biden has used the phrase *we stutterers* at times, but in most public appearances and interviews, Biden talks about how he *overcame* his speech problem, and how he believes others can too. You can watch videos posted by his campaign in which Biden meets young stutterers and encourages them to follow his lead. They're sweet clips, even if the underlying message—beat it or bust—is out of sync with the normalization movement.

Emma Alpern is a 32-year-old copy editor who co-leads the Brooklyn chapter of the National Stuttering Association and co-founded NYC Stutters, which puts on a day-long conference for stuttering destigmatization. Alpern told me that she's on a group text with other stutterers who regularly discuss Biden, and that it's been "frustrating" to watch the media portray Biden's speech impediment as a sign of mental decline or dishonesty. "Biden allows that to happen by not naming it for what it is," she said, though she's not sure that his presidential candidacy would benefit if he were more forthcoming. "I think he's dug himself into a hole of not saying that he still stutters for so long that it would strike people as a little weird."

Biden has presented the same life story for decades. He's that familiar face—Uncle Joe. He was born 11 months after Pearl Harbor and grew up in the last era of definitive "good guys" and "bad guys." He's the dependable guy, the tenacious guy, the aviators-and-crossed-arms guy. That guy doesn't stutter; that guy *used to* stutter.

"My dad taught me the value of constancy, effort, and work, and he taught me about shouldering burdens with grace," Biden writes in the first chapter of his 2007 memoir, *Promises to Keep*. "He used to quote Benjamin Disraeli: 'Never complain. Never explain.'"

Stephen Colbert launches across the Ed Sullivan Theater stage, as if from a pinball spring. It's early September, and his *Late Show* taping is about to begin. To warm up, he takes a few questions from the studio audience. Someone asks what he'd want in a potential new president. "Empathy?" Colbert deadpans. "A soul?"

Colbert tapes in Midtown Manhattan on the same stage where the Beatles made their American television debut 55 years ago, when Joe Biden was a mere 22. Biden struts out to a standing ovation and throws up his hands in amazement:

For me? A brief “Joe! Joe! Joe!” chant erupts.

At first, Colbert lobs softballs, and Biden touches on the key parts of his 2020 stump speech: Why voters must stand up to the existential threat of Trumpism and how the Charlottesville, Virginia, white-supremacist rally crystallized his decision to run. Then Colbert goes for it.

“In the last few weeks, you’ve confused New Hampshire for Vermont; said Bobby Kennedy and MLK were assassinated in the late ’70s; assured us, ‘I am not going nuts.’ Follow-up question: Are you going nuts?”

“Look, the reason I came on the Jimmy Kimmel show was because—”

The audience howls. Biden flashes a flirty smile. Colbert adjusts his glasses, sticks his pen in his mouth, and nods in approval. The joke was probably canned, but Biden landed it.

Colbert continues to press him about accuracy issues in his storytelling. The studio audience is silent; I’m watching from the balcony and can hear the theater’s air-conditioning humming overhead.

“I-I-I-I-I don’t get wrong things like, uh, ya know, there is a, we, we should lock kids up in cages at the border. I mean, I don’t—” People applaud before Biden can finish.

When the interview is over, Biden receives a second standing ovation. He peers up toward the rafters, using his hand as a visor against the bright lights. A white spotlight follows him offstage. Several minutes later, he glides through the stage door and out onto West 53rd Street. People call to him from the sidewalk. “Joe! Joe Biden!” He climbs into the back of an idling black SUV, and the doors clunk close.

I follow Biden for a couple of days while he campaigns in New Hampshire. His town halls have a distinctly Norman Rockwell vibe. One takes place in the middle of the day on the third floor of a former textile mill, another on a stretch of grass as the wind whips off the Piscataqua River. His crowds are predominantly older, filled with people who stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and wait patiently to ask questions. After he speaks, Biden typically walks

offstage to Bruce Springsteen's "We Take Care of Our Own," then saunters down the rope line for handshakes and hugs and selfies. One voter after another tells me they're unaware of Biden's stutter. "Knowing that he has had something like that to deal with and overcame it, as well as other really sad things that have happened—it just makes me like him more," says 70-year-old Grace Payne.

Back in New York, I start to wonder if I'm forcing Biden into a box where he doesn't belong. My box. Could I be jealous that his present stutter is less obvious than mine? That he can go sentences at a time without a single block or repetition? Even the way I'm writing this piece—keeping Biden's stammers, his *ums* and pauses, on the page—seems hypocritical. Here I am highlighting the glitches in his speech, when the journalistic courtesy, convention even, is to edit them out.

I spend weeks watching Biden more than listening to him, trying to "catch him in the act" of stuttering on camera. *There's one. There's one. That was a bad one.* Also, I start stuttering more.

In September, before the third Democratic debate, in Houston, I called Michael Sheehan, a Washington, D.C.–area communications coach whose company website boasts clients ranging from Nike to the Treasury Department. Sheehan worked with President Bill Clinton while he was in office and began consulting on and off for Biden in 2002, when he was in the Senate. On the day we spoke, he was in Wilmington, Delaware, doing debate prep with Biden.

Sheehan and I traded stories of daily indignities—he stutters too. "I remember exactly where the deli was; it was on 71st and First Avenue," he said with an ache in his voice. He lamented the interventionists, the people who volunteer, "'You know, why don't you speak more slowly?' I always want to say 'Holy shit! Why didn't I think of that? Thank you!'"

Sheehan's own stutter improved, but didn't fully go away, when he took up speech and debate in high school. This eventually led him to the theater, which is a common, if surprising, place where some stutterers find that they're able to speak with relative ease. Taking on a character, another voice, the theory goes, relies on a different neural pathway from the one used in conversation. Many successful actors have battled stutters—Samuel L. Jackson, Bruce Willis, Emily Blunt, James Earl Jones. In 2014, Jones, whose muscular baritone is the bedrock of one of the most quoted lines in film history, told NPR that he doesn't use the

word cured to describe his apparent fluency. “I just work with it,” he said.

At an August town hall, Biden briefly blocked on *Obama*, before subbing in *my boss*. The headlines afterward? “Biden Forgets Obama’s Name.”

Sheehan was extremely careful with the language he used to describe Biden’s speech patterns—“I can’t say it’s a stutter”—though he noted his friend’s habit of abruptly changing directions mid-sentence. “I do hear those little pauses, but I really don’t hear the stuff that you would hear from me or I would hear from you,” he said. A few minutes into our conversation, he choked up while discussing Biden’s tenderness toward young stutterers. “Sometimes I feel when he goes a little long on a speech, he’s just making up for lost time, you know?”

Sheehan told me about a night when he came home with his wife and saw the answering-machine light blinking: “Hey, Michael, it’s Joe Biden. I just was watching *The King’s Speech* with my granddaughter, and I just thought I’d give you a call, because it made me think of you. Goodbye!” He says the message felt like a secret fraternity handshake: “You and I have both been there, and only people in that society know what that is about.”

In Biden’s office, the first time I bring up his current stuttering, he asks me whether I’ve seen *The King’s Speech*. He speaks almost mystically about the award-winning 2010 film. “When King George VI, when he stood up in 1939, everyone knew he stuttered, and they knew what courage it took for him to stand up at that stadium and try to speak—and it gave them courage … I could feel that. It was that sinking feeling, like—oh my God, I remember how you felt. You feel like, I don’t know … almost like you’re being sucked into a black hole.”

Presidential candidates usually don’t speak about their bleakest moments, certainly not this viscerally. It resembles the way Biden writes in his memoir about the aftermath of the 1972 car accident that killed his first wife and young daughter and critically injured his two sons, Beau and Hunter: “I could not speak, only felt this hollow core grow in my chest, like I was going to be sucked inside a black hole.”

A few weeks later, I ask Jill Biden what she remembers about sitting next to her husband during the movie. “It was one of those moments in a marriage where

you just sort of understand without words being spoken,” she says.

As he watched *The King’s Speech*, Biden accurately guessed that the screenwriter, David Seidler, was a stutterer. “He showed me a copy of a speech they found in an attic that the king had actually used, where he marks his—it’s exactly what I do!” Biden tells me, his voice lifting. “My staff, when I have them put something on a prompter—I wish I had something to show you.”

He pulls out a legal pad and begins drawing diagonal lines a few inches apart, as if diagramming invisible sentences: x words, breath, y words, breath. “Because it’s just the way I have—the, the best way for me to read a, um, a speech. I mean, when I saw *The King’s Speech*, and the speech—I didn’t know anybody who did that!”

Biden is running for president on a simple message: *America is not Trump. I’m not Trump. I’ll lead us out of this.* With every new debate, with every new “gaffe,” the media continue to ask whether Biden has the stamina for the job. And with every passing month, his competitors—namely Senator Elizabeth Warren and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg—have gained on him in the polls.

A stutter does not get worse as a person ages, but trying to keep it at bay can take immense physical and mental energy. Biden talks all day to audiences both small and large. In addition to periodically stuttering or blocking on certain sounds, he appears to intentionally *not stutter* by switching to an alternative word—a technique called “circumlocution”—which can yield mangled syntax. I’ve been following practically everything he’s said for months now, and sometimes what is quickly characterized as a memory lapse is indeed a stutter. As Eric Jackson, the speech pathologist, pointed out to me, during a town hall in August Biden briefly blocked on *Obama*, before quickly subbing in *my boss*. The headlines after the event? “Biden Forgets Obama’s Name.” Other times when Biden fudges a detail or loses his train of thought, it seems unrelated to stuttering, like he’s just making a mistake. The kind of mistake other candidates make too, though less frequently than he does.

During his 2016 address at the American Institute for Stuttering, Biden told the room that he’d turned down an invitation to speak at a dinner organized by the group years earlier. “I was afraid if people knew I stuttered,” he said, “they would have thought something was wrong with me.”

Yet even when sharing these old, hard stories, Biden regularly characterizes stuttering as “the best thing that ever happened” to him. “Stuttering gave me an insight I don’t think I ever would have had into other people’s pain,” he says. I admire his empathy, even if I disagree with his strict adherence to a tidy redemption narrative.

In Biden’s office, as my time is about to run out, I bring up the fact that Trump crudely mocked a disabled *New York Times* reporter during the 2016 campaign. “So far, he’s called you ‘Sleepy Joe.’ Is ‘St-St-St-Stuttering Joe’ next?”

“I don’t think so,” Biden says, “because if you ask the polls ‘Does Biden stutter? Has he ever stuttered?’ you’d have 80 to 95 percent of people say no.” If Trump goes there, Biden adds, “it’ll just expose him for what he is.”

I ask Biden something else we’ve been circling: whether he worries that people would pity him if they thought he still stuttered.

He scratches his chin, his fingers trembling slightly. “Well, I guess, um, it’s kind of hard to pity a vice president. It’s kind of hard to pity a senator who’s gotten six zillion awards. It’s kind of hard to pity someone who has had, you know, a decent family. I-I-I-I don’t think if, now, if someone sits and says, ‘Well, you know, the kid, when he was a stutterer, he must have been really basically stupid,’ I-I-I-I don’t think it’s hard to—I’ve never thought of that. I mean, there’s nobody in the last, I don’t know, 55 years, has ever said anything like that to me.”

He slips back into politician mode, safe mode, Uncle Joe mode: “I hope what they see is: Be mindful of people who are in situations where their difficulties do not define their character, their intellect. Because that’s what I tell stutterers. You can’t let it define you.” He leans across the desk. “And you haven’t.” He’s in my face now. “You can’t let it define you. You’re a really bright guy.”

He’s telling me, in essence, that my stutter doesn’t matter, which is what I want to tell him right back. But here’s the thing: Most of the time, Biden speaks smoothly, and perhaps he sincerely does not believe that he still stutters at all. Or maybe Biden is simply telling me the story he’s told himself for several decades, the one he’s memorized, the one he can comfortably express. I don’t want to hear Biden say “I still stutter” to prove some grand point; I want to hear him say it because doing so as a presidential candidate would mean that stuttering truly

doesn't matter—for him, for me, or for our 10-year-old selves.

Now his aide is knocking, trying to get him out of the room. I push out one more question, asking what he saw reflected in that bedroom mirror as a kid.

He goes off into a different boyhood story about standing against a stone wall and talking with pebbles in his mouth, some oddball way to MacGyver fluency. I do the thing stutterers hate most: I cut him off. “What did that person look like?”

Biden stops. “He looked happy,” he says. “You know, I just think it looked like he’s
in control.”

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Rape survivors say they are being stigmatised for not wearing masks

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Campaigners say survivors are being castigated despite fact that covering face can trigger flashbacks and panic attacks.



Georgina Fallows suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, and cannot bear to have her mouth covered, years after her experience of rape. Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

When Georgina Fallows even contemplates putting on a mask, the flashbacks to her rape can be overwhelming and debilitating. She is not alone.

Rape survivors are among those voicing deep concerns about the stigma and ensuing “mask rage” attached to not wearing a face covering in shops, on transport and in other public places, prompting calls for better recognition of legitimate reasons why people are exempt.

A number of rape and sexual abuse survivors have told the charity Rape Crisis they are so scared of being confronted and verbally abused for not wearing face masks that they are avoiding places where they may be challenged.

“A significant proportion of rape survivors had their mouths or noses covered, or were choked or smothered, as part of the abuse and violence they experienced,” said Kate Russell, the national spokesperson for Rape Crisis England and Wales. “Covering their face and nose now can trigger flashbacks, panic attacks and

severe anxiety.”

Severe distress is recognised by the government as a reason for a legal exemption from the mandatory use of face coverings. But rape victims still fear they will be castigated.

Russell said: “There’s a lot of assumptions that people who aren’t wearing face masks are behaving that way because they’re selfish, stupid, careless or a combination of all three. This lack of awareness is creating legitimate anxiety among rape survivors that if they go out and about they might not be met with empathy and care.”

Fallows, a 29-year-old solicitor, suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder and cannot bear to have her mouth covered, years after her experience of rape.

“For part of my rape, he had his hand over my mouth. As a result, anything over my mouth – even an oxygen mask – can trigger a flashback. And that is hugely distressing. Physically, it feels like I’m back there again and he’s raping me and I am dying,” she said.

The distress she suffers amid flashbacks can be so severe that paramedics have felt it necessary to call the police to hold her down so they can sedate her. “It’s absolutely horrendous. I would like to be able to wear a mask, not just for my own health, but because I don’t want to make other people feel uncomfortable. But even the thought of putting on a mask makes me very, very, very panicky.”

When she tried to get her hair cut after lockdown, another customer interrogated her about her lack of a mask, refusing to accept Fallows’ reply that she was exempt.

“She told me that was ridiculous and said I had no proof. I cried all the way home. She truly believed that I was a self-centred, ignorant girl who didn’t give a shit about anybody else. I felt completely worthless.”

Since then, whenever she has tried to go to an enclosed public space without a mask, she has been challenged. She is now avoiding all shops and public transport which, since she has no car, is severely restricting where she can go. “I can’t see my family, who live two hours away. If I want to go anywhere, I have to walk.”

She fears this could leave her vulnerable to another attack – she was dragged off the street by her rapist – and so spends a lot of time alone in her bedroom. “I’ve tried so hard to rejoin life again, as it were. But it feels like it has all been taken away again.”

She contacted her MP, local councillor and mayor to urge them to mount a public awareness campaign about the legitimate reasons for mask exemptions, but received no response.

She has waived her right to anonymity to raise awareness. “People feel like they have the right to challenge you, and that is awful. You wouldn’t look at me and know I’d been raped, but I was, and it’s a huge problem for me. I spend most of my time trying to forget what happened to me. I don’t need to be challenged about this three or four times a day, just trying to live my life. All it does is remind me of something I’m desperately trying to forget.”

Rape Crisis wants shops and public transport companies to display signs and remind customers there are legitimate reasons people may not be wearing masks, which may not always be visible or obvious, and discourage customers from challenging each other.

The Oxfordshire Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre has compiled a list of ways in which some survivors of sexual violence have found it possible to wear face coverings.

“The list offers support and advice for survivors around face coverings and how they can perhaps make the experience of wearing a face covering less traumatic,” said Russell. She urged any survivor who is distressed or concerned about wearing a face mask to get in touch with Rape Crisis nationally or a local service.

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The Verge | Uber CEO on the fight in California: ‘We can’t go out and hire 50,000 people overnight’

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In a podcast interview, Dara Khosrowshahi rejected the notion that Uber will hire its drivers in California



In a podcast interview Wednesday, Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi rejected the notion his company is capable of employing all of its drivers in California, as a state judge has ordered it to do.

“We can’t go out and hire 50,000 people overnight,” Khosrowshahi said on the Pivot School podcast hosted by Kara Swisher and Scott Galloway. “Everything that we have built is based on this platform that... brings people who want

transportation or delivery together. You can't flip that overnight."

"YOU CAN'T FLIP THAT OVERNIGHT"

Last week, California Superior Court Judge Ethan Schulman ordered Uber and Lyft to comply with AB5, the state law that makes it more difficult for companies to use independent contractors. In his ruling, Schulman dismissed Uber's argument that it was a technology platform and that drivers were not core to its business. "To state the obvious, drivers are central, not tangential, to Uber and Lyft's entire ride-hailing business," Schulman wrote.

But the companies claim they would need to shut down operations in California completely in order to retool their businesses to comply with the law.

Khosrowshahi said the shutdown likely wouldn't be permanent. "It'll take time but we're going to figure out a way to be in California," he said. "We want to be in California."

Khosrowshahi confirmed reports that Uber was looking into other models, like a franchise-style system in which the company would license its brand to fleet operators in California. "There's a black car service that we have that's based on fleets," he said. "And we are trying to figure out exactly what we do going forward."

Regardless, Khosrowshahi said that Uber's response would be to limit the number of drivers allowed on its platform and to raise prices for customers after it eventually relaunches in the state. He predicted that upwards of 80 percent of those drivers who only log onto the app for 5-10 a week would no longer be able to earn on the platform. Trip prices in dense urban centers like San Francisco will go up around 20 percent, he said, while rates would be even higher in smaller, less dense cities.

THE INTERVIEW ALSO GOT THE CORE OF UBER'S POSITION IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

But the interview also got the core of Uber's position in the American economy. The company helped create both the so-called gig and sharing economies, helping to popularize the notion that someone with a car or a home could earn extra money renting either of those things out. But services quickly became professionalized, with drivers looking to earn a steady income and finding it

difficult to do so under the yoke of Uber's algorithm.

It's also an unsustainable business model — at least so far. Uber has never been profitable, routinely losing billions of dollars every quarter. And the company has long been accused of exacerbating income inequality in the country by helping popularize a system in which it uses independent contractors who aren't eligible for traditional employee benefits.

Galloway, who in addition to podcasting also serves as a professor of marketing at the New York University Stern School of Business, asked whether Uber is "ground zero for income inequality," noting the gap between Uber's regular employees who earn six-figure salaries and above, and the millions of drivers, some of whom live below the poverty line.

Khosrowshahi said the question starts with a "false premise, which is drivers and couriers who use our system are employees. They are not employees... they can decide when to work, etc. This idea that, oh you can have flexibility with employment at the same time, it's just false on the face of it."

"THEY ARE NOT EMPLOYEES"

Uber's critics note that there is nothing stopping Uber from continuing to provide drivers with the flexibility to set their own schedules under AB5. But the company rejects this notion, arguing that no company in California or elsewhere lets employees set their own hours.

Uber has proposed a "third way" through the ballot measure it's supporting in California called Proposition 22. The measure would allow the company to sidestep AB5 and go on classifying drivers as independent contractors, while also providing some added benefits like a minimum wage and access to health insurance. Along with Lyft and DoorDash, it has committed to spend over \$100 million, while union-backed driver groups only have around \$866,000 to lobby against it.

"We're absolutely going to be outspent by astronomical proportions," Vanessa Bain, co-founder of Gig Workers Collective, told Swisher and Galloway prior to Khosrowshahi's interview. "We don't have the capital, we don't have the resources to be able to spend anywhere near what these companies are spending to get Prop 22 passed."

Swisher proposed adding a driver representative to Uber's board to help driver better hold the company accountable. Khosrowshahi seemed to suggest it was possible, citing German companies that have an employee representative on their boards, which he called "cool." But such a thing would only be possible "in a different world," he said.

"I do think we have the system that's optimized... it's called capitalism," Khosrowshahi said. "It's not called labor-ism. It's not called socialism. It's capitalism and it's a system that's built to maximize shareholder value and capital. And if that's the only input, then you're going to keep getting the same results going forward that you got going backward. So these kinds of systemic changes, you know, I'm game for it. I don't want yesterday's capitalism 20 years ago to be the same 20 years from now."

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