



JOAO SILVA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Lucala, part of a river system where trafficked people began their terrible journeys. President Biden is visiting Angola this week.

# Angola Is a Place Where Roots Run Deep for African Americans

**By JOHN ELIGON**

MASSANGANO, Angola — They stood on a concrete platform over a cobblestone plaza as slave traders cast their final judgment, gazing westward at a bend in the mighty Cuanza River, where unknown horrors lay ahead.

For the ancestors of millions of African Americans, this slave market in Massangano, a village in Angola, was likely the place where they were sold into bondage. It was a point of no return. Historians believe that people

from Angola, in southern Africa, accounted for one of the largest numbers of enslaved Africans shipped to what became the United States, including the first to arrive at Point Comfort, Va., in 1619.

That history has largely gone unnoticed in Angola and the United States, where many Black Americans often make pilgrimages to Ghana and Senegal in West Africa to trace their ancestors’ treacherous journeys.

Angola is trying to change that. The country’s tourism ministry is developing a global campaign to

## Not Widely Known as Key Trading Point for Enslaved People

highlight the significance of Massangano. The ministry is also partnering with the United Nations Development Program and the American Chamber of Commerce in Angola to start a crowdfunding campaign to rehabilitate the village and its historical sites.

Angola’s president, João Lourenço, has asked his government to repair the lone dirt road to Massangano, which becomes impassable with heavy rain.

The government has applied for the Cuanza River corridor to be declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

“This is the place where African Americans came from,” said Márcio de Jesus Lopes Daniel, Angola’s tourism minister. “Come and see where your roots are.”

There are also hopes that this

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## Schumer Seeks F.B.I. Vetting For Nominees

### Pushes to Keep Norms in a G.O.P. Senate

By CARL HULSE

WASHINGTON — The top Senate Democrat offered on Monday to cooperate with Republicans next year in considering President-elect Donald J. Trump’s choices for his cabinet and other top administration jobs and called for the G.O.P. to adhere to traditional Senate vetting standards that Mr. Trump has threatened to skip.

In a letter to Senator John Thune, the South Dakota Republican who is set to become majority leader in January, Senator Chuck Schumer, Democrat of New York and the current leader, said that he and his colleagues “stand ready and willing to work” with Senate Republicans in considering the nominations, several of which have already proved to be explosive. The latest was announced on Saturday, when Mr. Trump disclosed that he intended to name Kash Patel, a loyalist and right-wing provocateur, as director of the F.B.I.

“In particular,” Mr. Schumer wrote to Mr. Thune, “we commit to working in a bipartisan fashion to process each nominee by reviewing standard F.B.I. background-investigation materials, scheduling hearings and markups in the committees of jurisdiction, and considering nominees on the Senate floor.”

The letter comes as Mr. Trump has threatened to skirt the Senate and install some of his nominees

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**DEFIANCE** The president-elect is not chastened, as his F.B.I. pick shows. News analysis. PAGE A16

## NEWS ANALYSIS

# With Pardon, Biden Echoes Rival’s Gripes

## Saying ‘Raw Politics’ Tainted Legal Process

By PETER BAKER

President Biden and President-elect Donald J. Trump now agree on one thing: The Biden Justice Department has been politicized.

In pardoning his son Hunter Biden on Sunday night, the incumbent president sounded a lot like his successor by complaining about selective prosecution and political pressure, questioning the fairness of a system that Mr. Biden had until now long defended.

“No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter’s cases can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son — and that is wrong,” Mr. Biden said in a statement announcing the pardon. “Here’s the truth,” he added. “I believe in the justice system, but as I have wrestled with this, I also believe raw politics has infected this process and it led to a miscarriage of justice.”

Mr. Biden’s decision to use the extraordinary power of executive clemency to wipe out his son’s convictions on gun and tax charges came despite repeated statements by him and his aides that he would not do so. Just this past summer, after his son was convicted at trial, the president rejected the idea of a pardon and said that “I will accept the outcome of this case and will continue to respect the judicial process.” The statement he issued on Sunday night made clear he did not accept the outcome or respect the process.

The pardon and Mr. Biden’s stated rationale for granting it will inevitably muddy the political waters as Mr. Trump prepares to take office with plans to use the Justice Department and F.B.I. to pursue “retribution” against his political adversaries. Mr. Trump has long argued that the justice system has been “weaponized” against him and that he is the victim of selective prosecution, much the way Mr. Biden has now said his son was.

Their arguments are, of course, different in important respects. Mr. Trump contends that the two indictments against him by Mr. Biden’s Justice Department amounted to a partisan witch hunt targeting the sitting president’s main rival. Mr. Biden did not explicitly accuse the Justice Department of being biased against his family, but suggested that it was influenced by Republican politicians who have waged a long public campaign assailing Hunter Biden.

As it happens, the Justice Department has rejected both accusations. The prosecutions of Mr. Trump and the younger Mr. Biden were each handled by

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## As Wars Divert Allies of Syria, Rebels Pounce

**By RAJA ABDULRAHIM**

For years, President Bashar al-Assad of Syria was able to beat back opposition fighters with the help of Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. Now, with those allies weakened or distracted by their own conflicts, rebels have seized the opportunity to shift the balance of power.

The rebel fighters spent months training and preparing for a surprise offensive, but even they may not have predicted how quickly they would advance. On Saturday, the rebels said they had captured almost all of Aleppo, one of Syria’s biggest cities. They now control a broad stretch of land in the west and northwest of the country, according to the rebels and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor based in Britain.

The timing of the assault and its success, analysts say, reveal the vulnerabilities of Mr. al-Assad’s once-formidable coalition.

The Syrian civil war started 13 years ago when peaceful anti-government protests were met with brutal crackdowns, escalating into a conflict between forces loyal to Mr. al-Assad and rebels. Over time, the combatants drew support and fighters from regional and international powers.

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## Russia’s Elites Feeling Pinched By Slow Growth

**By ANATOLY KURMANAEV**

BERLIN — The wartime economy that Russia spurred into overdrive is slowing, causing tensions among the country’s economic elites as the war with Ukraine approaches its fourth year.

Many Russian civilian industries have stopped growing, and some had even gone into decline by October, according to the latest official data. The country’s currency, the ruble, dropped to its weakest level in two years last week, and businesses say they are struggling to get new loans or get paid by clients.

The central bank sharply raised the country’s benchmark interest rate in October to 21 percent, the highest since the end of the Soviet Union, in an attempt to dampen inflation.

Last month, the central bank also lowered its forecast for Russia’s economic growth next year to 0.5 to 1.5 percent, compared with 3.5 to 4 percent this year. The slowdown comes even as the government continues to pump record amounts of money into the economy to finance the war.

The combination of rising prices and falling economic activity has led some economists and officials to warn that the Russian economy is moving toward stagflation, a quagmire in which prices rise quickly without

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## Widening Crisis in Georgia’s Capital

The move to delay talks to join the European Union has set off nightly protests in Tbilisi. Page A7.

# A Culture-War Battle Roils a School Panel in Liberal Manhattan

**By CLAIRE FAHY**

A profanity-laced argument that almost turned into a physical altercation. An auditorium full of people turning their backs and humming to drown out an anti-transgender protester. A defiant rendition of “This Little Light of Mine.”

The near-constant disruptions stretched the November meeting

of a Manhattan parent council to nearly four hours. About halfway through, Maud Maron, a conservative activist and the council’s best-known member, paused to admonish the crowd.

“This has become theater,” she said. “Next month will be the 10th month of these histrionics.”

Ms. Maron’s critics say she’s the one putting on a show. As she spoke, she wore a black trucker

## Clash Over Trans Issues Deadlocks Council

hat with the blue and green logo of “XX-XY Athletics” — a clothing company whose mission statement revolves around the idea that “women’s sports need to remain female.”

The question of whether transgender girls should be allowed to play girls’ sports and the debate over the rights of transgender people more broadly have prompted political skirmishes on county commissions, college campuses and the presidential campaign trail.

In New York, that question has made the community education

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### Broadcasting Into North Korea

Kim Seongmin, who fled to South Korea in the 1990s, transmits to his homeland twice a day, delivering information Pyongyang wants to suppress. PAGE A4

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### Ringling Up Card Swipe Fees

As the cash era ends, small business owners are cheering efforts to rein in mounting transaction expenses that are hurting their bottom lines. PAGE B1

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### Still Rapping in Fortnite

An avatar for Juice WRLD, who died in 2019, appeared at a special event in the video game to debut a new song alongside Eminem and others. PAGE C1

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### After the Hysterectomy

Patients often aren’t told about which organs remain and which were removed — particularly the ovaries, which influence lifelong health. PAGE D4

## OPINION A22-23

### Michelle Cottle

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