



A glimpse of a hotter climate to come

The planet might have entered the age of ‘global boiling’ in 2023

BY CHICO HARLAN

AVAS, GREECE — By the time the flames were barreling down the slope, heading for 40 miles of parched forest, the fire chief said he already knew: This was the big one.

His part of Greece had gone two months without rain. A record heat wave had baked the area for weeks. Within hours, the fire had sprinted through acres of pines, hissing and spouting 120-foot flames, reaching the brink of a village where a single home — belonging to Kostas Dinas, a retired attorney — was perched on the hillside outskirts.

Dinas, 66, had figured he’d live in that home until they “carried me out flat.”

But then came the hottest year humanity had ever seen.

It had been a year that had started with merely very hot temperatures and then intensified midway. What made the subsequent months stand out wasn’t so much any single record but rather the heat’s all-consuming relentlessness. It went day by day, continent by continent, until people all over the map, whether in the Amazon or the Pacific islands or rural Greece, had glimpsed a climate future for which they are not prepared.

“It felt like the earth was about to explode,” Dinas said.

Even if its extremes are ultimately eclipsed, as seems inevitable, 2023 will mark a point

SEE CLIMATE ON A4

Biden mum on record U.S. oil production on his watch

BY EVAN HALPER
AND TOLUSE OLORUNNIPA

You won’t hear President Biden talking about it much, but a key record has been broken during his watch: The United States is producing more oil than any country ever has.

The flow of huge amounts of crude from American producers is playing a big role in keeping prices down at the pump, diminishing the geopolitical power of OPEC and taming inflation. The average price of a gallon of regular gasoline nationwide has dropped to close to \$3, and analysts project it could stay that way leading up to the presidential election, potentially assuaging the economic anxieties of swing-state voters who will be crucial to Biden’s hopes of a second term.

But it is not something the president publicly boasts about. The politics of oil are particularly tricky for Democrats, whose chances for victory in the 2024 elections could hinge on whether young, climate-conscious voters come out in big numbers. Many of those voters want to hear that Biden is doing everything in his power to keep oil in the ground.

“If you are not looking carefully at what the administration is actually doing, it is easy to get the wrong impression,” said Kevin Book, managing director at ClearView Energy Partners, a research firm. “There are a lot of

SEE OIL ON A5



MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

Angelo Soriano, a nurse from the Philippines, cares for a patient at Sanford Medical Center in Bismarck, N.D. Thousands of nurses overseas are ready to recharge a U.S. hospital industry decimated by pandemic burnout and retirements. But most can’t get here.

Broken U.S. immigration system leaves firms struggling

A North Dakota hospital is desperate for nurses, but visa backlogs and other problems keep overseas applicants away

BY LISA REIN
IN BISMARCK, N.D.

biggest workforce crisis in years. The nurses were left adrift with no immediate path to the United States.

It was one more gut punch from a broken immigration system untouched by Congress for 33 years and largely operating on a framework dating to 1965. As a record surge of unauthorized migrants enters the United States through its southern border, stoking political divisions and straining resources, the troubled system for those eligible to come here legally has buckled in the background. Congress splintered over the issue again last month, as Republicans resisted calls from the Biden administration for more aid to Ukraine unless it comes with more-stringent border policies.

Since Congress last updated the number of new arrivals the country will admit each year — a tiny fraction of whom are allowed to come in permanently to work — the economy is more than twice as large. But despite growing demand to help fill 8.7 million open jobs with skilled and unskilled

SEE NURSES ON A6

‘We need more fighters like her’

Eleanor Traylor, ‘sister-friend’ of Angelou, Baldwin and Morrison, champions their books and other banned literature

BY KEITH L. ALEXANDER



MARVIN JOSEPH/THE WASHINGTON POST

At 90, literary critic and former Howard department head Eleanor Traylor keeps a packed schedule of speaking engagements celebrating her friends and orates on the censorship and banning of books.

Eleanor Traylor has a schedule that rivals those of most Washington dignitaries.

On a Sunday afternoon in October, Traylor was speaking on the life of actress Hattie McDaniel during a ceremony at Howard University marking the return of the Black actress’s historic 1940 Oscar, which had long been missing from the school. After a horde of guests jostled to take photos with her, Traylor slipped out the back door and into the driver’s seat of her cobalt-blue Mercedes.

An onlooker marveled, “Dr. Traylor, you *still* drive?”

“Of course I still drive. I’m not dead yet,” she snapped, putting her car in reverse.

Traylor, who turned 90 in December, bristles at the notion that age should slow her down. The former head of Howard’s humanities and English departments, Traylor is among the last of a close-knit generation of African American writers that includ-

ed James Baldwin, Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison. As many of her old friends’ published works have faced book bans, Traylor has become one of the most prominent voices countering that effort.

In the days following the McDaniel ceremony, Traylor hosted a private reception at her Dupont Circle home attended by Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson and BET Networks Chair Debra L. Lee. She had a fitting with a private designer for a new gown that Traylor had modeled after the one Lady Gaga wore at President Biden’s 2021 inauguration. She was a panelist at Martin Luther King Library, where an award-winning documentary on Angelou’s life was shown. A week later, she was a guest speaker for a program honoring Inez Smith Reid, a retired judge of the D.C. Court of Appeals. Then Traylor was on a flight to Paris to spend Thanksgiving with friends.

SEE TRAYLOR ON A8

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CNN reporter Francesca Street, who writes about love and romance, was one of 2023’s most engaging reporters. C2
Paula Abdul alleged in a recently filed lawsuit that former “American Idol” producer Nigel Lythgoe sexually assaulted her. C3

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