

APRIL 14, 2025



# The Endgame

by  
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Ukraine's  
Volodymyr Zelensky  
in his presidential  
office March 21

# TIME Magazine

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# Exclusive: Zelensky on Trump, Putin, and the Endgame in Ukraine

Shuster is a senior correspondent at TIME. He covers international affairs, with a focus on Russia and Ukraine. For his first book, *The Showman*, he reported inside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's compound in Kyiv as the Russian invasion unfolded.



Nearly six years have passed since Volodymyr Zelensky was [elected president of Ukraine](#), yet he still cringes at all the polished brass and chandeliers that crowd his office. The place does seem rather gaudy, like a room plucked straight from [Mar-a-Lago](#), and Zelensky can't seem to stop apologizing for it as he shows me around one evening in March. He would rather scrap the furniture, he says, rip down the pilasters, and use white paint to hide the gold leaf on the ceiling.

“But, you know, we haven’t had much time for renovations, especially these last few years,” he says, [referring to the war](#). Only in the back of his chambers, behind Ukraine’s version of the Resolute Desk, is there a space that feels like home to Zelensky—a small room with a single bed and a set of paintings that he chose himself. They are not museum pieces. At the local bazaar, similar ones might fetch a few hundred dollars at most. But they matter to the president because of what they represent.

The one that hangs above his bed shows a Russian warship sinking into the Black Sea. Another shows Ukrainian troops fighting recently on Russian territory. The third, Zelensky’s favorite, shows the Kremlin engulfed in flames. “Each one’s about victory,” he says as we cram into the space for a look at the pictures. “That’s where I live.”



But he did not invite me over for a tour. His basic aim, as far as I could tell, was to clear the air after his [recent visit to the Oval Office](#), the one that became a viral sensation for the world and a source of trepidation for his country. For several interminable minutes on the morning of Feb. 28,

President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance had berated Zelensky, calling him ungrateful, weak and dangerous while talking over his attempts to argue back. “You don’t hold the cards,” Trump told Zelensky. “You’re gambling with World War III!”

On the advice of people he trusts, Zelensky has mostly avoided talking about the episode, not wanting to deepen a diplomatic crisis that had threatened to cost him nothing less than his country’s existence. His standard answer to questions about it has been, “Let’s leave that to history.” Even now, he hopes to turn the page and move on. But his instincts rarely allow him to keep quiet for long about the things that bother him, which is partly what got him into trouble with Trump.

Going into that meeting, Zelensky says, he had it all planned out. He had been to the White House a handful of times during the war. But this would be his first sit-down with Trump in the Oval Office, and it would mark a critical point in Trump’s effort to force a peace deal in Ukraine. To make an impression, Zelensky decided to bring a set of gifts. Their aim was to break through any ill will the U.S. President felt toward Ukraine, and to dispel what Zelensky believed was the influence of Russian propaganda on the White House.

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One of the gifts fit with an emerging tradition of the Trump era, in which guests bring shiny tokens of their respect and fealty. In a recent example,

[Benjamin Netanyahu](#), the Prime Minister of Israel, gave Trump a golden pager, commemorating the explosive devices Israel used to kill or injure thousands of its enemies last year in Lebanon. Vladimir Putin went further than that, commissioning an oil painting of Trump and sending it this month to the White House. In Zelensky's case, the gift was even glitzier: the championship belt of his friend Oleksandr Usyk, who holds the world heavyweight boxing title.

**Read More:** [Volodymyr Zelensky Is TIME's 2022 Person of the Year](#)

As he took his seat in the Oval Office, Zelensky placed the belt on a side table near his right elbow, planning to reach over and hand it to Trump in front of the assembled journalists. Instead, as the televised briefing began, Zelensky reached for another one of his gifts. It was a folder containing a series of gruesome photographs, showing Ukrainian prisoners of war after their time in Russian captivity. Some of their bodies were grotesquely emaciated. Others showed signs of torture. "That's tough stuff," Trump said, his face leaden, as he took the photos from Zelensky and began leafing through them.

Those pictures, according to some U.S. officials, marked the point when the meeting went wrong. Had Zelensky offered the championship belt, the gesture might have lightened the mood. The photos had the opposite effect. They seemed to get Trump's guard up, as though he were being blamed for the suffering of those soldiers. Still, even today, Zelensky does not regret his decision to present these images. He had been trying to reach beyond Trump's transactional instincts, beyond his need for flattery, and appeal to Trump as a human being. "He has family, loved ones, children. He has to feel the things that every person feels," Zelensky says. "What I wanted to show were my values. But then, well, the conversation went in another direction."



**Among the most painful exchanges** in the Oval Office meeting took place near the end, when Zelensky asked whether J.D. Vance had visited Ukraine during the war. They both knew he had not, and Vance shot back that he had no interest in Zelensky's "propaganda tours."

The insult must have stung. Throughout the invasion, it has been the policy of Ukraine to encourage guests to see its destruction up close. Zelensky often brings visitors to hospitals full of wounded soldiers, ruins caused by missile strikes, or mass graves that Russian forces leave behind. Envoys from the White House have made a point of avoiding such excursions since Trump took office in January. But Zelensky remains committed to their value in diplomacy, and his team invited me to take such a trip on the day of our interview.

Late that morning, the presidential convoy drove out from Zelensky's office toward Kyiv's western suburbs, and it came to a stop in the village of Moshchun. Before the Russian invasion, the place had a population of about 800 people, and its claim to fame was that Zelensky, in his early career as an

actor and comedian, had filmed one of his most popular sitcoms here. Now, throughout Ukraine, Moshchun is known as the hamlet where the Russian attempt to seize Kyiv had failed.

The battle that raged in the surrounding fields and forests for 23 days in late February and March of 2022 was arguably the most consequential to take place in Europe since the Second World War. Had it ended differently, the Russians might have succeeded in encircling Kyiv, ousting Zelensky, swallowing up most of Ukraine and redrawing the European map. Instead, hundreds of Russian commandos were slaughtered at Moshchun by a ragged mix of Ukrainian troops, policemen, national guardsmen and regular civilians, some of them armed with nothing more than hand grenades and hunting rifles.

**Read More:** [\*'Nobody Believes in Our Victory Like I Do.' Inside Volodymyr Zelensky's Struggle to Keep Ukraine in the Fight\*](#)

“Our warriors in Moshchun were outnumbered 13 to one,” Zelensky told me. That is not propaganda, he insisted. “That’s a fact.”

Three years had passed since Russia lost that battle, and we had come to mark the anniversary. For the occasion, the office of the local governor had prepared an elaborate ceremony, with a military band and an honor guard standing at attention, the bayonets of their rifles glinting in the sun. The field of battle, where at least 125 Ukrainians had died, was now festooned with flags, some of which read, “Ukraine or Death.”

As we waited for the ceremony to begin, I walked over to a wooden hut where a few women were selling wartime souvenirs—little gnomes adorned with camouflage and bullet casings. Sidling up to me, a member of Zelensky’s staff recalled how this scene had looked in previous years, on the first and second anniversaries of the battle. “It looked more real,” he whispered.

Maybe Vance had a point. It can be hard to hold the line between solemnity and propaganda. As time passes, fresh wounds become old scars. Battlefields become memorials, and the kitsch starts creeping in. The scenery around Zelensky looked undeniably choreographed as he walked past the honor

guard and set a wreath upon its stand. The immediacy of the events had faded, and that complicates the diplomatic challenge Zelensky faces at this stage in the war. The survival of his country depends on his ability to maintain the support and sympathy of foreign allies. But as the war morphs into a deadly routine, it becomes harder for him to hold their attention, and to keep people like Trump on his side.





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**At the edge of the ceremony, one of the** presidential guards suppressed a yawn, which made me do the same. It had been difficult to sleep the night before. The latest swarm of Russian drones had appeared in the sky soon after midnight. They were reported to be Shaheds, or “martyrs,” a design that Russia had acquired from Iran. On social media, Ukrainians like to announce their arrival by posting emojis of a motor scooter, because the weapons sound like flying Vespas, revving as they dive out of the clouds. In my apartment near the presidential compound, the air-raid sirens failed to sound. So I woke up from the booms of the anti-aircraft cannons stationed on the rooftops, the light from their muzzle flashes dancing on my bedroom wall.

Zelensky was on a train at the time, returning from his latest trip to Europe. One of his stops that week had been in Finland, which has the unfortunate distinction of sharing an 830-mile border with Russia, the longest of any

NATO member. In the center of Helsinki, Zelensky took a tour of a sprawling underground shelter meant to keep Finnish citizens safe and comfortable in case of a Russian bombing campaign. Although its population is only 5.6 million, the country had built a network of these shelters big enough for nearly five million people. “These kids, they were playing hockey down there,” Zelensky noted in amazement. “They’ve got gyms, shops, like little towns, a huge amount of space.” He had signed an agreement with the Finnish government to build similar warrens in Ukraine.

On his way home by train, the screen of his iPhone flashed up with an air-raid alert, noting the approach of the Shaheds. According to the Ukrainian air force, 214 of them would strike in waves throughout the night, some loaded with vacuum bombs that could incinerate entire buildings. The main target was the city of Odesa on the Black Sea coast, where the drones hit an apartment block, a shopping mall and other businesses. They also cut off power to three districts of the city.

One of Zelensky’s closest allies, [Petr Pavel, the president of the Czech Republic](#), happened to be in Odesa that day, and his train departed only 20 minutes before the bombardment began. The experience left him shaken. Earlier that day, Trump and Putin had a phone call to discuss the American proposal for a ceasefire, and the Russian leader said he would consider at least some of its terms. Pavel had trouble grasping the duplicity. “One has to be truly cynical when declaring the will to have peace negotiations, or negotiations on a ceasefire, and at the same time to launch a massive attack on civilian infrastructure,” he said during his visit with Zelensky the next day. “It is extremely difficult to deal with such a party.”

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**Among Zelensky’s international allies, Pavel** has long been among the most steadfast and effective. In the first year of the Russian invasion, the U.S. scoured the world for the kinds of artillery shells Ukraine needed to keep up the fight, and it came up short. Then Pavel, the leader of a country smaller than Idaho, found a way to source more than a million of these shells, which the Czechs quickly gifted to Ukraine.

I first met him last summer in Switzerland, during a [peace summit](#) Zelensky hosted for more than 80 countries from around the world. Held in the alpine

resort of Bürgenstock, the summit was meant to advance Zelensky's vision for ending the war. It was based on a plan he called the Peace Formula, composed of ten principles he saw as essential to any lasting settlement with Russia. Some of its demands struck his allies as fanciful. Point five called for the full and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from all of Ukraine. Point seven demanded justice for all Russian war criminals, including Putin and his top generals.

No one expected Ukraine to achieve all of these goals, certainly not anytime soon. Still, Zelensky and his team saw the formula as their north star, not a practical roadmap to peace but an ideal toward which the world's diplomats should aspire in seeking to end the war. "It lays out what we would see as the final resolution of this crisis and its consequences," says Zelensky's chief of staff, [Andriy Yermak, who also serves as Ukraine's lead negotiator](#). "We stand by that vision."

Like most of Ukraine's foreign allies, President Pavel supported the Peace Formula. But he had a far more sober understanding of how the war would end. He had served in the military for most of his career, reaching the rank of general and working in the NATO high command. On the sidelines of the summit in Switzerland, he told me the eventual peace in Ukraine would be ugly, angry and difficult for Zelensky to accept. "Achieving a return of full sovereignty and territorial integrity is not a goal for the short term," Pavel said. "It will not happen in the foreseeable future."

He urged me to think instead about historical battle lines and occupations that remained frozen for decades. The Soviet domination of East Germany, for instance, where the Berlin Wall stood for more than 28 years. Or the heavily militarized border between North and South Korea, which remain officially at war despite the truce reached in 1953. Or the Baltic countries in eastern Europe, which the Soviet Union occupied in 1940. Using sanctions against Moscow and other forms of diplomatic pressure, the West tried to resist that occupation. But it still went on for over half a century. All of these examples, Pavel told me, serve as precedents for where the war in Ukraine will likely end up. "I don't see a chance," he said, "that Ukraine would be able to turn the war into their fast success."

Indeed, in the months since the summit in Switzerland, Zelensky's grand vision for peace has been cut down to size. He no longer mentions the Peace Formula in his speeches. In October, as the U.S. presidential elections drew near, Zelensky presented a less ambitious plan. It consisted of only five points. The first one called for Ukraine to receive an invitation to join the NATO alliance, while the last two took a new approach, appealing to U.S. financial interests rather than any shared values. Among the enticements Zelensky offered was access to "trillions of dollars worth of minerals" hidden beneath Ukrainian soil.

Last fall, after discussing that idea with Zelensky in New York, Trump seized on it, and his administration soon proposed a deal for the U.S. to profit from Ukraine's mineral wealth as compensation for military support. Zelensky balked at the terms that Trump suggested in his first draft of the deal. But after weeks of tense negotiations, the U.S. and Ukraine settled on a version that both sides could accept. Zelensky and Trump were meant to sign it after their meeting in the Oval Office. Their argument scuppered those plans.

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**The next day, Trump set the minerals deal aside** and decided to get tough with Zelensky. His administration announced a suspension of aid to Ukraine, including supplies of critical intelligence, weapons and ammunition.

Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, General [Keith Kellogg, said the Ukrainians](#) had "brought it on themselves." Zelensky had failed in the Oval Office to demonstrate a willingness to accept Trump's plan for peace, and the U.S. response was "sort of like hitting a mule with a two-by-four across the nose," Kellogg said. "Got their attention."

More than that, it hobbled Ukraine's armed forces on the battlefield. Without access to data from U.S. satellites, they lost the ability to detect the approach of Russian bombers and cruise missiles. As a result, Ukraine had less time to warn civilians and military personnel about an approaching airstrike. The impact was most acute in the Russian region of Kursk, where the Russians made swift advances. But Zelensky declined to pin the blame on the Trump administration. "It's not connected," he told me. "Don't get me wrong. The state of morale always depends on whether your partners are standing beside you. But I wouldn't say that the freeze influenced the operation in Kursk."



**Read More:** [\*Zelensky's Oval Office Clash with Trump Draws Pride and Fear in Ukraine\*](#)

What bothered Zelensky most about Trump's role in that operation had less to do with intelligence sharing than with Russian disinformation. In the middle of the battle, Trump held a call with Putin, who told the U.S. president that thousands of Ukrainian troops in Kursk had been surrounded by Russian forces. "That was a lie," Zelensky told me. But Trump continued to amplify it.

For Zelensky it looked like part of a pattern. U.S. officials, he says, had begun taking Putin at his word, even when their own intelligence contradicted him. "I believe Russia has managed to influence some people on the White House team through information," Zelensky told me. "Their signal to the Americans was that the Ukrainians do not want to end the war, and something should be done to force them."

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**The tensions that resulted from the Oval Office meeting** began to dissipate about ten days later, when Zelensky and Trump sent their most senior aides for a round of talks in Saudi Arabia. The meeting, which was held in the city of Jeddah on March 11, lasted around nine hours. The American delegation, led by Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, wanted to discuss the details of where a ceasefire would leave the conflict line. "At one point we even broke out a map and started drawing on it how we're going to end this war," Waltz later told Fox News. "Of course both sides are going to have to make some compromises."

The remark suggested the U.S. wanted to know how much territory Ukraine was willing to cede to the Russians. But Yermak, the lead Ukrainian negotiator at the meeting, says he did not interpret it that way. "The map was important to help them understand the current situation, where things stand, the key strategic elements." The Americans did not grandstand or make demands. They took the time to listen to the Ukrainians recount the history of the war and the battles fought along the way to the present moment.

**Read More:** [\*"Hundreds of Dead": Inside the Fallout from Trump's Ukraine Intel Pause\*](#)

Several hours into the talks, Yermak and his team placed a call to Zelensky and asked for instructions. He told them to agree to a ceasefire with no preconditions. In some ways, it was another massive climbdown. Zelensky has spent the entire war demanding security guarantees from the Americans and concessions from the Russians. Now nearly all of his demands had been set aside. Yermak admitted this was difficult. "But we have to be pragmatic. We have to move step by step," he told me. "This is not the moment for idealism."

After the talks in Jeddah, the U.S. agreed to resume supplies of military aid and intelligence to Ukraine. The Oval Office meeting began to seem like an unpleasant memory. From Zelensky's perspective, not all of the fallout from that meeting was detrimental. His approval numbers spiked in the first days of March, reaching close to 70% in [some polls](#)—a level not seen since the early months of the Russian invasion. This struck me as strange. Given how much he put at risk by arguing with Trump and Vance in the Oval Office, it

seemed reasonable for his citizens to blame him for the failure of diplomacy. When I asked about this, Zelensky answered with a question of his own.

“Why did the Ukrainians defend themselves at the start of this war? It was because of dignity,” he told me. “We do not consider ourselves some kind of superpower,” he continued, but the Ukrainians “are very emotional, and when it comes to our sense of dignity, freedom, democracy, our people rise up and unite.” What they hoped to see in the Oval Office was proof that the United States remains their ally. “But in that moment there was the sense of not being allies, or not taking the position of an ally,” Zelensky said. “In that conversation, I was defending the dignity of Ukraine.”

No matter the cost, his people do not fault him for it. Nor, it seems, have the Americans. In an [Ipsos](#) poll conducted in mid-March, about two weeks after the clash in the Oval Office, 60% of respondents said the U.S. should support Ukraine’s bid to join NATO. Three-quarters agreed with Zelensky that Putin cannot be trusted to abide by any ceasefire. Even after weeks of attacks against Ukraine in the right-wing media, a majority of Americans hold a favorable view of Zelensky.

He sees that as an opportunity. As Trump continues to push for peace, Zelensky intends to influence the process by making direct appeals to American voters. No doubt he agreed to give me an interview in part for that reason. But he also acknowledges that, without winning over Trump himself, he has little chance of securing a stable peace.

On that front, at least, Putin’s recalcitrance may turn out to be an asset. Over the last few months, while Zelensky has given ground and made concessions, the Russian demands have only grown more extreme. While launching bombs against civilians, the Kremlin has continued to push its maximalist terms for ending the war, including the dismantling of Ukraine’s armed forces, the removal of its government, and a guarantee that Ukraine will never join the NATO alliance.

To Zelensky’s dismay, Trump has agreed to some of these concessions without getting much in return. He has taken Ukraine’s bid to join NATO off the table. He has even suggested he would welcome Russia back into the G7, the club of the world’s wealthiest democracies. Allowing such a thing,

Zelensky says, would lift the only concrete punishment Putin has faced for the invasion of Ukraine: his isolation. “That’s a big compromise,” Zelensky told me. “Imagine releasing Hitler from his political isolation.”

As Trump has pushed to end the war, he seems to have reserved all the carrots for Russia, while the Ukrainians get the stick. The image makes Zelensky smile and weigh his words. “If the carrot is poisoned, then thank God,” he says. “Maybe that’s the sneakiness of this diplomacy.” If he wants to, Trump can squeeze concessions from the Russians, because he seems to be the only one that Putin fears. At points in the peace process, when the U.S. threatened to sanction the Kremlin for its continued bombing raids against Ukraine, “the Russians got really scared,” Zelensky says.

Over time, he still hopes Trump will realize that Putin is weaker than he seems, that he cannot be trusted, and that Russia’s victory in this war would not only be a disaster for Ukraine. It would be a loss, he says, for the entire West, and especially for the U.S. and its current leaders. Trump and his team would not accept such a loss, Zelensky says. “They have their own ambitions. They see their role in history,” not only as powerful leaders but as those who can achieve a dignified end to the war. “That’s why I don’t believe in these apocalyptic scenarios. Honestly I don’t.”

Still, in one of his recent phone calls with Trump, Zelensky tried to paint a picture of that scenario. What would happen if the ceasefire proves vulnerable to endless Russian violations? All of the towns and cities in Ukraine that sit along the front line would become like a “thousand Berlins” during the Cold War, walled off and divided, barely able to survive. They would be “dead zones,” he said, on the map of Europe, and Zelensky does not think Trump wants to leave that kind of legacy.

In the coming weeks, Zelensky will keep making that case to Trump and Vance, appealing not to their narrow political interests but to their principles as statesmen and human beings. During one of their recent phone calls, he even suggested that Vance should reconsider his decision not to visit Ukraine during the war. “We’re still waiting for you,” Zelensky said with a laugh. The Vice President did not respond.



A few days later, as we stood near the doorway of Zelensky's office, I wondered what had happened to the championship belt. Did he have a chance to give it to Trump, or did he bring it home after the meeting? "I don't know," Zelensky told me. "Maybe it's still sitting there." In the confusion that followed their argument, he left it on the side table next to the sofa. Later that day, once the Ukrainians had gone, a member of the White House staff found the belt and took it to Trump's private dining room, where it now sits with other souvenirs, a memento of failed diplomacy.

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# How We Chose the 2025 TIME Earth Awards



Each year TIME honors individuals whose actions have had an indelible impact on global efforts to address one of the most pressing crises facing our planet: climate change. This year marks TIME's third annual [Earth Awards](#), and the stakes couldn't be higher.

In 2024, the planet breached 1.5°C of warming above pre-industrial temperatures, an ominous milestone—and a reminder of the urgency with which the world must tackle this challenge. And although climate action faces headwinds from the rising tide of populist politics around the world, this year's group of honorees remain steadfast in championing sustainability and shaping a greener future.

There is the Environmental justice leader [Catherine Coleman Flowers](#), who has a legacy of advocating for marginalized communities, particularly Black and rural families affected by untreated sewage. She has gone on to work with Democrats and Republicans alike in an effort to bring about lasting change.

Alongside, we honor [Jay Inslee](#), the Governor of Washington from 2013 to 2025, and a leader in local climate action. As co-founder of the U.S. Climate Alliance he has brought together two dozen states to drive progress towards a clean economy.

There is former New York Mayor and U.N. Special Envoy [Michael Bloomberg](#), who is steadfastly dedicated to supporting innovative solutions. In January, when President Donald Trump announced the U.S. would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, Bloomberg Philanthropies stepped up to coordinate an effort to continue funding the nation's climate goals.

In Ghana, chef [Selassie Atadika](#), the founder of Midunu—an experiential restaurant that highlights the region's culinary heritage—and Midunu Chocolates, uses her food to advocate for sustainable agriculture and showcase the power of the African kitchen. In 2024 she was announced as Yale's inaugural Global Table Fellow in an effort to highlight the connection between sustainability, health, and culture.

Back in the U.S., Former Tennessee Republican Senator [Bill Frist](#) is calling for climate change to be recognized as a public health crisis. He serves as the global chair of The Nature Conservancy which last year launched the Senator Bill and Tracy Frist Initiative for Planetary Health.

And actor [Rainn Wilson](#) is on a mission to better communicate the urgency of the climate crisis. With that goal in mind, in 2022 he co-founded Climate Basecamp, an organization that brings scientists and trendsetters together to make talking about the reality of climate change more accessible.

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# Australia's Leader Takes On Social Media. Can He Win?

Campbell is an editor at large at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. He covers business, tech, and geopolitics across Asia. He was previously China bureau chief.



The press conference starts like any other: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese is grilled on everything from affordable housing and war in the Middle East to his relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Then, Lana, 11, picks up the microphone. “Do you think social media has an impact on kids?” asks the suburban Canberra primary-school student.

Of all the burning issues of the day, it's the one that Albanese feels on surest ground to answer. It also goes to the heart of his government's most eye-catching policy—one that directly affects Lana and the other student reporters invited to interrogate Australia's top politician for *Behind the News*, a long-running kids' current-affairs show.

"It certainly does, and that's why we're going to ban social media for under-16s," Albanese replies resolutely. "I want to see you all out playing with each other at lunchtime, talking to each other like we are now, and engaging with each other ... rather than just being on your devices."

The fact that Australia's Prime Minister carved out 45 minutes between parliamentary sessions to indulge kids at least two terms from voting age underlines his belief that social media represents an unambiguous threat to his nation's most precious resource: its children. And he is determined to do something about it.



The perils are largely beyond dispute. Some of the world's biggest companies use the fig leaf of "engagement" to hook children during

vulnerable developmental stages, rewiring their brains via a firehose of addictive content that psychologists say has changed human development on a previously unfathomable scale. In the decade that followed the proliferation of mobile internet services in 2010, depression among young Americans rose around 150%, with corresponding spikes in anxiety and self-harm. The trend is mirrored across the developed world, including Australia, where mental health hospitalizations soared 81% for teen girls and 51% for boys over the same period. “It has become the No. 1 issue that parents are talking about,” says Albanese. “These are developing minds, and young people need the space to be able to grow up.”

On Dec. 10, in a bid to carve out and ring-fence that space, Australia will implement a 16-year-old age limit for users of platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and X. The law is the first of its kind in the world.

While most platforms have a self-imposed age limit of 13, enforcement is laughable; kids can simply input a false date of birth. Rather than targeting underage kids, the Australian law will punish companies that fail to introduce adequate safeguards with fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$31 million) for as yet undefined “systemic breaches.” (The precise details of how and when these fines will be imposed have yet to be made clear.) In other words, Australia will flip the equation: instead of relying on users to truthfully disclose their ages, it will put the burden on the world’s tech giants.

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It’s a bold move, directly targeting some of the world’s most influential companies run by its richest and most powerful men, including X owner [Elon Musk](#)—who has dubbed the Albanese government “fascists” and the age restriction “a backdoor way to control access to the internet by all Australians.”

For its proponents, however, the law is a critical first step toward checking social media’s toxic influence on children.

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TIME



# The Social Media Lockup

Inside the bold plan to  
make kids unplug

by  
**CHARLIE CAMPBELL**

time.com

In November, France's Education Minister said the E.U. should "urgently" follow Australia's example—not least since the infusion of artificial intelligence means that supercharged algorithms are peddling disinformation faster than ever. "The truth is smothered by lies told for power and for profit," former U.S. President Joe Biden [lamented](#) in his farewell address.

The upshot: Australia has now come to serve as a beachhead for others to prepare their own defenses. The U.K., Ireland, Singapore, Japan, and the E.U. are among many jurisdictions closely monitoring Canberra's next move. In the U.S., the bipartisan Kids Off Social Media Act ([KOSMA](#)) to restrict social media for kids under 13 and bar platforms from pushing targeted content to users under 17 is advancing through the Senate, while around half of states passed legislation last year to make it harder for children and teens to spend time online without supervision. On March 5, Utah became the [first state](#) to require app stores to verify users' ages and get parental consent for minors to download apps.

"If the age restriction goes well in Australia, then I think it will go global very quickly," says Professor Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist at New York University's Stern School of Business and author of *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*.

Albanese's stance is also remarkable for just how politically uncontroversial it has proved. As Australia heads for a close federal election in May, Albanese's center-left Labour Party and the right-leaning Liberal-National Coalition opposition are locking horns on every issue, whether nuclear energy, health care funding, or taxation. But the social media age restriction passed with bipartisan support and stands to be implemented no matter who triumphs at the ballot box.

That's not to say there aren't detractors—and not just the social media companies, which say the legislation passed without due consultation. "We are concerned the government's rapid, closed-door consultation process on the minimum-age law is undermining necessary discourse," a Meta spokesperson told TIME. TikTok complained that an exemption for YouTube was "akin to banning the sale of soft drinks to minors but exempting Coca-Cola."

Some mental health experts, meanwhile, say blocking kids from social media will drive them to darker, less regulated corners of the internet. Others fear children who bypass the age restriction will find themselves in a less controlled space where they're unable to seek help. There's also huge debate over what exactly counts as social media when myriad gaming and educational websites also employ addictive scrolling features. A group of 140 mental health experts penned an [open letter](#) to the Albanese government to oppose the ban, calling it "too blunt an instrument to address risks effectively."

For Albanese, an imperfect plan is better than no plan at all. "We acknowledge that this won't be absolute," Albanese tells TIME during an exclusive interview in his parliamentary office in February. "But it does send a message about what society thinks and will empower parents to have those conversations with their children."

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They are children whose upbringing is unrecognizable from that of any previous generation. If parents once fretted about the attention kids paid to comic books and television, the immersive, dopamine-driven pull of the computer screen—video games, chat platforms, social media—has changed how nearly everyone looks at the world, but especially young people. A February government [report](#) by Australia's eSafety Commissioner found that 80% of preteens used social media. A 2024 Pew Research [poll](#) found 46% of American teens said they were online "almost constantly." Nearly a quarter of U.K. 5-to-7-year-olds now have their own smartphone.

The devices can bring physical danger. Pedophiles and traffickers stalk the virtual world with greater freedom than in the real one. In 2023, the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) [tracked](#) 298 attempted abductions involving 381 children and [received](#) 36.2 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation online.



But concern also wells around [a child alone with a phone](#). For Albanese, there's something especially sad about Australian kids shunning some of the world's highest rates of sunshine for the artificial glare of screens. His own childhood in a one-parent household in Sydney's industrial inner-city suburb of Camperdown was far from idyllic. His mother was crippled by chronic rheumatoid arthritis, meaning the family survived on her disability payments and his grandmother's pension. Home was a government-housing block flanked by a children's hospital, biscuit factory, and metal foundry. But there was a grassy patch where kids would hang around playing rugby, cricket, or swapping football cards. "We would go out to play at 9 o'clock and just knew you had to be home for lunch, and then do the same in the afternoon," Albanese recalls. "People interacted with each other. And that capacity to communicate face-to-face is really important. They learn how to win, how to lose, how to engage."

It may sound wistful, but Albanese's perspective is backed by science. Psychologists say physical play, preferably outdoors and among a mix of ages, is essential to a child's development. Young people learn how to not

get hurt by negotiating scenarios in which getting hurt is possible, such as climbing a tree or leaping from a swing at its zenith.

But such play is increasingly a thing of the past. Instead, time on screens has grown and grown, turbo-charged in 2009 with the arrival of the “like” button on Facebook and “retweet” on Twitter, now X—innovations that, in the minds of many experts, transformed social media from a harmless friendship forum to an algorithm-driven popularity contest. Instagram debuted a year later, coinciding with the launch of the iPhone 4 and Samsung Galaxy S, both of which featured the world’s first front-facing cameras. Instagram’s array of filters allowed users to make images less natural and more stylized and are now ubiquitous across Snapchat, [TikTok](#), and other platforms.

The result has been a great deal of diversion, not all of it positive. The digital realm brings striking new elements of risk, for instance, to young people’s emerging sexuality, from the distorting effect of readily available hardcore pornography on all who see it (the term [incel](#), or involuntarily celibate, was coined for frustrated, often misogynistic young men who bond online), as well as a heightened risk of online grooming and sextortion. In July 2022, 17-year-old Rohan Patrick Cosgriff [died](#) by suicide near his home outside Melbourne after he was pressured into sending an intimate picture to someone called “Christine” on Snapchat, who then demanded money not to distribute the images. A note in Cosgriff’s pocket simply said: “I made a huge mistake. I’m sorry.”

The Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation received over 58,000 reports of online child abuse in 2023–24, a 45% year-on-year rise. Australia is far from unique; the NCMEC, in the U.S., saw a rise of over 300% in reports of online enticement including sextortion from 2021 to 2023.

For girls, social media takes a different role—one that statistics show can prove even more damaging. Whereas male social hierarchy has traditionally adhered to physical attributes like sporting prowess, girls find value in the breadth and depth of relationships. In short, popularity. And one way to climb the social ziggurat is to undermine your peers: spread gossip, turn friends against rivals, and lower others’ value within the group.

**Read More:** ['We're In a New World': American Teenagers on Mental Health and How to Cope](#)

But the explosion of front-facing cameras and filters has meant the reflection teens see in the mirror has become less and less attractive compared with the carefully curated photos and videos of their peers online, causing self-worth to plunge. “Girls seeing lots of beautiful pictures of other girls living perfect lives is absolutely devastating to them,” says Haidt. Those with [poor self-worth](#) are likelier to lash out at others, with “indirect” bullying more prevalent among adolescent girls than boys.

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One of the first things that Kelly O’Brien saw upon entering 12-year-old Charlotte’s bedroom on Sept. 9 was her cell phone on the floor. Then she noticed two pillows neatly arranged under the duvet. By the time she found her daughter in the en suite bathroom it was too late. When the paramedics arrived, “they just looked at her and said, ‘So sorry, she’s gone,’” says O’Brien, eyes brimming.

Kelly believes Charlotte took her own life at their suburban Sydney home in large part because of the toxic effect of social media. Charlotte was a bright girl who loved cheerleading, doted on her baby brother, and was navigating the tricky road from childhood to adulthood, equally obsessed with [Taylor Swift](#) and [Gossip Girl](#) as well as the latest Disney animation. Charlotte had suffered bullying at school, but her parents say it was social media that rendered that cycle of acceptance and rejection unbearably acute. “The weeks that she was in, she was over the moon,” says Mat O’Brien, Charlotte’s dad. “The week she was out, just awful.”

As soon as Charlotte got a cell phone it became a problem, spurring reclusive, depressive episodes. Charlotte had her phone confiscated more often than she had access, Kelly says, a punishment that invariably began with two days of sullen withdrawal followed by a marked upturn in mood—classic addiction symptoms, say psychologists.

The night before her passing, Charlotte had been upbeat, enjoying her favorite pasta dinner and baking banana bread for the next day. “I kissed the happiest girl in the world good night,” says Kelly. Something happened after

she got to her room. A friend who spoke to a distraught Charlotte later that evening has since told Kelly about the vile, hateful message her daughter received via Snapchat. (“We are deeply committed to keeping our community safe,” a Snap spokesperson told TIME. “Our hearts go out to this family, whose pain is unimaginable.”)

Social media companies say that bullying has always been a problem and will continue whether via schoolyard taunts, crank phone calls, or their platforms. Still, beginning in the early 2010s, girls’ mental health was hit by a sharp rise in rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm. The rate of self-harm for young adolescent girls in the U.S. nearly tripled from 2010 to 2020, while the rate for older teens doubled. In 2020, 1 out of every 4 American teen girls had experienced a major depressive episode in the previous year.



Kelly O'Brien explained the devastating effects of social media on Charlotte in a letter to Albanese as part of the 36 Months campaign—a grassroots

movement to raise and properly enforce the age limit for social media to 16. “When you hear firsthand about a parent losing their child then it undoubtedly has an impact,” says Albanese, who later invited the O’Briens to meet with him in Canberra. Also at that meeting was Michael Wipfli, an Australian radio presenter known as “Wippa,” who spearheaded 36 Months. “Sat in the Prime Minister’s office, it was clear he knew what needed to be done,” says Wippa. “We needed leadership, a captain’s call, somebody to say, ‘enough is enough.’”

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Albanese first became involved in leftist politics while studying economics at the University of Sydney. He rose up the Labour Party ranks with a reputation as a backroom mediator and a knack for forging concord between squabbling factions. After Labour’s shock defeat in Australia’s 2019 federal election, Albanese emerged as an unexpected but unifying leadership candidate. “He’s an accidental Prime Minister,” says Nick Bisley, dean of social sciences at La Trobe University.

Indeed, Albanese has struggled to unify an ever more polarized country—despite an undeniable everyman charisma. As Albanese inspected repairs to a bridge destroyed by floodwater in northern Queensland, he was joined by the mayor of the cut-off town of Ingham, population 4,455, who arrived wearing shorts, a faded polo shirt, thong sandals, and a cap advertising the local tractor mechanic. “You didn’t have to dress up!” teased a local lawmaker as helicopters carrying supplies buzzed overhead. “Anthony’s an ordinary bloke!”

It’s a pit stop that showcases Australia’s endearing insouciance as well as how vital internet access has become for communications across its vast expanse—not least as [climate change](#) renders extreme weather more frequent and severe. Australia is the world’s sixth largest country by landmass—roughly equivalent to the U.S. minus Alaska—though 55th by population with just 26 million people. The result is an abundance of sparsely inhabited outback communities for which social media is “absolutely critical,” admits Albanese. “We’re not Luddites,” he adds, reeling off the various platforms he posts on. “Young people aren’t being banned from a range of interactions through technology that are about their

education or engaging with each other. We're not confiscating people's devices."



Albanese points to the success of last year's ban of cell phones in Australian public schools. "The impact has been phenomenal," says Australian Education Minister Jason Clare. A [survey](#) of almost 1,000 school principals in Australia's most populous state of New South Wales shows 87% say students are less distracted in the classroom while 81% have noticed improved learning. Meanwhile, South Australia has seen a 63% [decline](#) in critical incidents—such as bullying and distribution of explicit or derogatory content—involving social media and 54% fewer behavioral issues. "But when school ends the phones come out and they're back in the cesspit of social media," says Clare. "In the old days, bullying and intimidation stopped at the school gate. Now it's at home as well."

**Read More:** [\*For Teens, Saving Each Other From Social Media Is a Team Effort\*](#)

Still, critics say the social media age restriction was a knee-jerk reaction passed without proper consultation, involves thorny data-privacy issues, and creates even more risks for youngsters who use platforms illicitly. “It’s absolutely dumb, it’s not going to work,” says Roy Sugarman, a Sydney-based clinical psychologist. “It’s ridiculous because the genie is out of the bottle.”

Sugarman compares the Australian ban to [American Prohibition](#) in the 1920s, which some studies suggest actually increased alcohol consumption in the U.S. while leading to a spike in organized crime. He says a far better tactic would be to teach teens to be technologically astute, to understand online dangers, how to think rationally, act with purpose, and deal with the virtual world to mitigate damages. “Human behavior doesn’t lend itself to being told what to do,” says Sugarman. “It’s the opposite. Humans hate being told what to do.”

History also offers examples that point the other way. While Sugarman invokes the example of Prohibition, Wippa compares social media age restrictions to similar rules for cigarettes, which while routinely flouted have led smoking rates among young people to plummet.

But the fact is, nobody knows what will happen. Nothing like this has been attempted before. And then there’s the question of implementation. Australia’s eSafety Commissioner, Julie Inman Grant, says that around 30 different age-verification technologies are being tested in collaboration with various social media platforms, including French firm BorderAge, which claims to accurately gauge age using AI analysis of hand signals. Meanwhile, platforms, which the legislation makes responsible for enforcing the age restrictions, want to pass that burden to app stores, principally run by Apple and Google, saying they should act as gatekeepers.

Grant compares the legislation to laws regarding fencing swimming pools. In the early 1970s, the widespread availability of cheap, preformed fiberglass pools meant the rate of young children drowning soared. Not long after, states began requiring all private swimming pools to be fenced, which led deaths to fall and has since been adopted nationwide. But that didn’t mean Australia suddenly stopped teaching kids to swim, fired all the lifeguards, or fenced off the ocean. “This is not the great Australian

firewall,” says Grant. “Children’s social media accounts aren’t going to magically disappear. But we can make things a lot better for parents and a lot better for kids.”

Grant speaks with the zeal of a convert. After cutting her teeth as a congressional staffer focused on tech issues in the 1990s, the Seattle native worked 17 years at Microsoft, two years at Twitter, and a year at Adobe, before being tapped for her current post (the first e-Safety Commissioner anywhere in the world). She believes, from her inside knowledge of the tech industry, that the big players will always put profit first. “They can target you with advertising with deadly precision,” she says. “They could use the same technologies to be able to identify hateful content and child sexual abuse material.”

Recent events have cemented her skepticism. Last April, Grant sued X over its refusal to remove videos of a religiously motivated [stabbing](#) of a bishop in a Sydney church that sparked rioting. X eventually geofenced it so it wasn’t available in Australia, while Musk hit out at Grant as “censorship commissar,” leading to a raft of online abuse. “I still receive death threats,” she tells TIME.

But even more painful for Grant is the knowledge that 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana [watched](#) that same Sydney church attack video on X just six minutes before leaving home with a knife to murder three young children and injure 10 others in the U.K. town of Southport on July 29. “Having gratuitous violence of terrorist events freely available normalizes it, desensitizes it,” says Grant, “and in the worst cases [it] radicalizes and spills over into real-world harm.”

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The spat between Grant and Musk prompted Albanese to label the tech mogul an “arrogant billionaire.” But asked by TIME whether he’s concerned by Musk’s burgeoning influence as [Trump’s consigliere](#), Albanese demurs, instead decrying how misinformation can erode trust in institutions. “People have conflict fatigue,” he says. “People need to have respectful debate. And I think there is a concern in society that some of that is breaking down.”

Albanese's squirming is understandable. Australia and the U.S. are close allies linked via the Quad and AUKUS military arrangements. But Trump spent his first term taking aim at historic alliances, accusing South Korea and Japan of not paying their fair share for American security guarantees, and his [return to the White House](#) has heralded a full-frontal assault on European democracies. Australia is one of the few close American allies with a trade deficit with the U.S.—“since Truman!” Albanese stresses—as well as a record of deploying alongside American forces and standing up to Beijing. In 2023, Canberra also agreed to invest \$3 billion into U.S. shipyards.

However, the White House has already hiked tariffs on Australian exports of aluminum and steel, while Albanese’s plan to force tech companies like Google and Meta to pay for news shared on their platforms was recently labeled an “outrageous” attempt to “steal our tax revenues” by White House trade adviser Peter Navarro.

The social media age restriction is yet another friction point between Canberra and American Big Business. Meta founder [Mark Zuckerberg](#) has called on the Trump Administration to help “push back on this global trend” of what he terms “censorship.” Then there’s Kevin Rudd, former Australian Prime Minister and current ambassador to the U.S., who was previously [quoted](#) calling Trump not only “the most destructive President in history” but also a “village idiot.”

“The center-left of Australian politics is a long way from the MAGA world,” adds Bisley, of La Trobe University. “Australia’s welfare-state instincts are just not particularly aligned to the free-market capitalism of the U.S.”

It’s friction that raises the question of whether Australia can even enforce social media age restrictions. While potential \$31 million fines may seem eye-watering, that’s the top penalty for “systemic breaches”—rather than per offense, day, or child—and mere pocket change to someone like Meta’s Zuckerberg or X’s Musk, the world’s richest man, worth hundreds of billions and with an ideological antipathy to what he perceives as curbs on free speech. (X failed to respond to repeated requests for comment for this story.) Asked whether social media platforms could be banned outright for

noncompliance with the new legislation, Australia's Communications Minister Michelle Rowland replies, "That's not a feature of the legislation."

In the final analysis, it might not matter. For Mat and Kelly O'Brien, the social media age restriction at least takes the issue out of parents' hands, just like for driving or drinking alcohol. Asked whether Charlotte would still be alive if the legislation had been in place last September, Kelly has no doubt. "Absolutely," she says, "1,000%." And while it might be too late to save Charlotte, they're hopeful Albanese's stand means other families might be spared similar heartache. "I feel like lesser men would have crumbled," Kelly says. "But he stood up to Big Tech and the naysayers. I'm very grateful and proud."

***If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental-health crisis or contemplating suicide, call or text 988. In emergencies, call 911, or seek care from a local hospital or mental health provider. For international resources, [click here](#).***

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# This Isn't Trump's First Intelligence Crisis—But the Damage This Time Is Different

Elliott is a senior correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C., bureau, where he covers national campaigns, elections, and government. He also writes TIME's politics newsletter, [The D.C. Brief](#).



*This article is part of The D.C. Brief, TIME's politics newsletter. Sign up [here](#) to get stories like this sent to your inbox.*

To put it bluntly: no one working for a three-letter agency in Washington trusts President Trump to keep his mouth shut.

From early in his first term, Trump showed so little regard for the nation's secrets that it shifted relationships between the U.S. intel community and those of our strongest allies. Less than a month into the job, Trump and the Japanese Prime Minister plotted their response to a North Korean missile launch in the open-air patio of Mar a Lago, photos of which ended up on Facebook. Then Trump shared Israeli-passed intelligence with Russia's Foreign Minister in May 2017, horrifying Israeli intel leaders.

Subsequently, a spy for the U.S. inside Vladimir Putin's regime was extracted on fears Trump and his team were being sloppy with the nation's secrets and could put the spook at risk.

Also that year, Trump boasted to his Filipino counterpart that he had two nuclear submarines off the coast of North Korea and shared details of a Manchester arena bombing before the Brits were ready to release them—leading U.K. spy services to shut off the spigot of secrets for a spell. And he demanded his interpreter turn over his notes after a meeting with Putin, prompting some in the intel community to suspect he had spilled more secrets to Moscow. Trump's Florida retreat became a mark for spies from around the world.

Two years later, Trump tweeted—yes, tweeted!—spy satellite images over Iran that confirmed U.S. capacity to look into any adversaries' backyards and confirmed a capacity that had been in doubt, at least publicly. That same year, he boasted to Bob Woodward that the United States had nuke tools that would shock Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin.

All that happened before August of 2022, when FBI agents raided Mar a Lago to retrieve classified documents that seemed to follow Trump from his presidency into his return to private life.

[video id=CBN6MGke]

This Trumpian trail of recklessness with the nation's most valuable secrets puts the revelations that Trump's senior leadership discussed an active military operation over an unprotected messaging platform in a different light. During his first term, the intelligence community could view Trump as the chaos agent who those around him were doing their best to contain. But the details of the Signal chat that *Atlantic* editor-in-chief Jeffrey

Goldberg inadvertently gained access to show how different things are in Trump's second term. The carelessness has spread beyond the Big Guy himself, seeping into those tasked with carrying out his agenda.

The indifference to keeping America's dirty laundry buried in the basket has been one of the rare constants in Trumpism, as has been a see-no-evil ethos by the President in response to forehead-slapping details that have stunned national security hawks of every background.

"They've made a big deal out of this because we've had two perfect months," Trump said Tuesday, responding to—but not really answering—questions from reporters about why his national security adviser Mike Waltz [added](#) Goldberg to a conversation that also included Vice President J.D. Vance, Defense Secretary Pete [Hegseth](#), Secretary of State Marco [Rubio](#), and spy chief Tulsi [Gabbard](#).

In an [interview](#) with NBC News on Tuesday, Trump described it the "only glitch in two months."

In fact, Trump seemed to treat the whole incident as an annoyance that was taking him away from his chaos-soaked [agenda](#).

"This was not classified," Trump [said](#) during a session with visiting diplomats. "Now if it's classified information, it's probably a little bit different. But, I always say, you have to learn from every experience."

Early Wednesday, *The Atlantic* [released](#) a tranche of the messages to let the public have a broader look at what had been discussed in that Signal chat, including messages from Hegseth that included the precise timeline of air strikes scheduled to commence around two hours later—details that are routinely classified. The Administration called the whole story a "hoax" and "misinformation," and said it proved no wrongdoing, while Democrats [argued](#) the exact opposite in real time. It was a classic choose-your-own-adventure reality.

Instead of addressing the terrible mistake, GOP lawmakers mostly ignored it over two days of previously scheduled hearings featuring the nation's top nat-sec players. At Tuesday's Senate hearing on global threats, they asked

exactly zero questions about the conversation that included the name of a CIA official, active targets, and the timing, weapons and aircraft involved in the surprise March 15 attack on Yemen's Houthi militants. As TIME's Nik Popli, on the Hill for the hearings, reported, Trump's top intelligence officials insisted nothing was improperly shared—internally or externally—about the strikes.

On Wednesday, when a House intel panel convened with the same Administration officials, the tone continued to be one of disbelief that details of any unfolding military action were being shared on an app widely seen as a vulnerability for hackers—by people widely seen as top hacking targets of foreign adversaries. Republicans maintained their defense of their team, with Rep. Dan Crenshaw of Texas even joking about the details. “I will note I always use fire emojis when I see terrorists getting killed,” he said, referencing Waltz’s response in the chat to an unfolding military attack apparently hitting its target.

Crenshaw’s quip mirrored the attitude of much of Trump’s base, which has largely brushed aside Signal-gate, while also embracing a case of amnesia about how almost everyone on the leaked chain had blasted former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2016 over the apparent national security catastrophe of her using a private email account—on par with what predecessor Colin Powell used during his time as President George W. Bush’s top diplomat. Those allegations birthed years of “lock her up” chants during Trump’s rallies.

MAGA world’s reaction to Trump’s team using a similarly non-secure platform couldn’t be more different, proving once again that seemingly nothing will dent Trump’s invincibility among Republicans.

“Lock her up” has found its update: Let it go.

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# Some States Consider Bills That Would Punish People Seeking Abortions

Lee is a reporter at TIME. She covers U.S. news with a focus on health and reproductive rights.



Abortion rights advocates are closely following what they call a growing and alarming trend: lawmakers in several states have introduced bills that would allow authorities to charge people who obtain abortions with homicide.

Such bills have been introduced in at least 10 states for the 2025 legislative session: [Georgia](#), [Idaho](#), [Indiana](#), [Iowa](#), [Kentucky](#), [Missouri](#), [North Dakota](#), [Oklahoma](#), [South Carolina](#), and [Texas](#), according to the Center for

Reproductive Rights, which is tracking these proposals. Most of those states have already banned abortion either in nearly all circumstances or after six weeks of pregnancy. ([Missouri](#) and [North Dakota](#) are the only exceptions; both of them previously had near-total abortion bans that have since been overturned.)

The bills refer to an embryo or fetus as an “unborn child” or “preborn child.” They claim that an embryo or fetus can be a homicide victim, opening the door for authorities to charge and prosecute people who seek abortions. Some of the bills also propose removing clauses from state laws that protected pregnant people seeking abortions from prosecution. The bills include limited exceptions, [such as](#) in a situation resulting in “the unintentional death of a preborn child” after “life-saving procedures to save the life of a mother when accompanied by reasonable steps, if available, to save the life of her preborn child.”

Lizzy Hinkley, senior state legislative counsel at the Center for Reproductive Rights, says she believes there has been an uptick in the number of these bills that have been introduced this year, which is “very, very alarming.” Hinkley points out that many of the states considering these bills, such as South Carolina, [allow for the death penalty](#).

“It’s very much right out of the anti-abortion playbook to be introducing bills that try to control, try to oppress, and punish pregnant people,” she says.

Three of these bills—in [Indiana](#), [North Dakota](#), and [Oklahoma](#)—have since failed to advance. And Mary Ziegler—a professor at the University of California, Davis School of Law with expertise in abortion—says the likelihood of the remaining bills passing is “relatively low.” These types of proposals are generally unpopular; Ziegler says that even conservatives and anti-abortion activists are divided on whether to penalize people seeking abortions.

“Having said that, I think [these bills are] more likely to pass now than they were in previous years, and the fact that they keep coming back is significant,” Ziegler says. She adds that more of these bills have been introduced since the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2022 ruling in [Dobbs v. Jackson](#)

[Women's Health Organization](#), which ended the constitutional right to abortion.

Typically, anti-abortion laws penalize medical providers offering abortion care. On March 17, the Texas attorney general announced that a midwife in the state had been [arrested](#) on charges of illegally providing abortions—the first time Texas officials have brought these kinds of charges forward since the *Dobbs* ruling. Separately, a New York-based doctor is [facing](#) a civil suit in Texas and criminal charges in Louisiana for allegedly prescribing, via telemedicine, abortion pills to patients in those states.

**Read More:** [What Are Abortion Shield Laws?](#)

The recent criminalization bills also include fetal personhood rhetoric—a legal doctrine [at the forefront of the fight over reproductive rights](#) that aims to give an embryo and fetus the legal rights of people. On his first day in office, President Donald Trump signed an [Executive Order](#) declaring that the U.S. government will only recognize “two sexes, male and female.” Abortion rights advocates [sounded the alarm](#), saying that [the order contains fetal personhood language](#) because it claims that sex is assigned “at conception.”

Hinkley says that research has already found that pregnancy criminalization has been on the rise since the *Dobbs* decision. Pregnancy Justice, a nonprofit committed to protecting the rights of pregnant people, released a report in September, which [found](#) that at least 210 pregnant people faced criminal charges for “conduct associated” with pregnancy in the year following the *Dobbs* ruling—the highest number recorded in one year. Hinkley says that report “portended what we’re seeing right now.”

“It doesn’t matter if [the bills] pass this year; they’ll be back next year,” Hinkley says. “There was a point not that long ago when it would seem absurd to have a total abortion ban without exceptions for rape and incest, or a total abortion ban, period, without exceptions to save a pregnant person’s health, and that is the reality that pregnant people are living in across the country right now. So whether it’s this year or next year or a few years down the road, this is a very harrowing indication of what the end game is for anti-abortion legislators and anti-abortion activists.”

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# The Mental Toll of Unexpectedly Spending Months in Space

Kluger is an editor at large at TIME. He covers space, climate, and science. He is the author of 12 books, including [Apollo 13](#), which served as the basis for the 1995 film, and was nominated for an Emmy Award for TIME's series [A Year in Space](#).



The longest eight days Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams ever spent turned out to last more than nine months. On [June 5, 2024, the two NASA astronauts](#) launched aboard the maiden mission of Boeing's new Starliner spacecraft for what was supposed to be a short shakedown cruise to the International Space Station (ISS), before turning around and heading home after just over a week. A veteran of two long-duration station rotations, Williams had spent a cumulative 322 days in space before her June launch.

While to all appearances she has always thrived in her off-planet work, she was excited about this planned quickie mission.

“We want to go and get back as quickly as possible so they can turn our spacecraft around and also take all those lessons learned and incorporate them into the next Starliner,” she [told TIME](#) in a conversation before launch.

But that was not to be. [Thruster problems and helium leaks](#) aboard Starliner led NASA to conclude that the spacecraft was not fit to carry the astronauts home. Instead the ship left the station and [splashed down uncrewed](#), leaving Wilmore and Williams to join the station rotation, living and working aboard the ISS until a fresh SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft arrived to take them home. After much anticipation, that ship [docked with the station on March 16](#) and the two astronauts climbed aboard for an ocean landing later today, March 18, a full 278 days after they were originally scheduled to depart the ISS.

So what kind of emotional adjustment did Williams and Wilmore have to make as they went from overnight guests to long-term residents aboard the station? And what will the reacclimation to life on Earth be like after so much time away from home and family—and for that matter from sunshine, fresh air, and the simple fact of gravity?

Ever since the first astronauts and cosmonauts went aloft, they’ve been having to make that through-the-looking-glass transition between terrestrial and extraterrestrial living, and the results have been sometimes comical, sometimes surreal.

In 1965, astronauts Frank Borman and Jim Lovell spent a then-record two weeks orbiting Earth in their [Gemini VII](#) spacecraft. Lovell recalls being belowdecks aboard the recovery vessel *USS Wasp* shortly after splashdown and being evaluated by a NASA psychologist. Lovell was drinking coffee and had a spoon in one hand. Meaning to put it down, he instead simply released it a foot above the table, leaving it to fall with a clatter. The psychologist looked at him curiously, and Lovell just shrugged. After a fortnight in zero-g he was accustomed to letting go of objects in mid-air and having them accommodatingly float where they were.

In 1971, astronaut Dave Scott had a more otherworldly experience. The commander of [Apollo 15](#), Scott walked on the moon, returned to Earth, and a few days later was feted by his neighbors at a welcome-home cookout. Standing in his back yard, wellwishers circulating, he looked up at the sky where a bright moon was shining. “A week ago,” he thought incredulously, “I was there.”



Before Wilmore and Williams make the adjustment of returning to Earth, of course, they had to prepare themselves for leaving it in the first place, and that was a process they were at least partly denied. Training for a long-duration space mission is equal parts physical and mental and it's that mental piece—saying goodbye to all earthly people and things for half a year or more—that they missed out on, instead training for just an eight-day mission. That comes at a price.

[video id=FofR3eRF autostart="viewable"]

In 2015, TIME visited Russia’s Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan to film the documentary series “[A Year in Space](#),” about astronaut Scott Kelly’s

near 12-month stay aboard the ISS. Just two days before Kelly launched from Baikonur, TIME spoke to astronaut Jeffrey Williams, part of the backup crew, who would have flown in Kelly's place if he were unable for some reason to go. He confessed that if that day, 48 hours before liftoff, Kelly was suddenly scratched from the flight, it would be a challenge for him to get up to speed mentally since there is simply no substitute for having fully and wholly prepared for the actual fact that he would be leaving Earth for a year.

Retired astronaut [Mike Massimino](#), a veteran of two shuttle missions, says that missing family was likely the hardest mental challenge Wilmore and Williams faced. "Although they love their jobs and are grateful for the opportunity, there still is the heart tug of being away from home for so long," he says.

Still, to all appearances at least, Wilmore and Williams quickly fit into the ISS life cycle—at least if NASA livestreams of the pair at work both inside the station and [during spacewalks](#) were any indication.

"Suni has just oozed such joy for the past eight months," says retired astronaut [Marsha Ivins](#), a veteran of five space shuttle missions and a friend of both Wilmore and Williams. "It's infectious to watch her."

"We came up prepared to stay long, even though we plan to stay short," [Wilmore said](#) in a recent air-to-ground press conference. "That's what we do in human space flight."

"All career astronauts know the risks involved in human spaceflight, long or short duration, and they accept those risks when they strap into the rocket for launch," says Ivins. "A large part of our training is to learn to deal with the unexpected, the off-nominal, the contingency scenarios, and still get the job done."

Coming home will present different challenges. "The toughest thing about returning to Earth after many months in space is adapting to gravity," says retired astronaut Terri Virts, a veteran of two space flights, including one long-duration stay as ISS commander. "The grueling rehab program NASA put me through was key to my quick adaptation back to my planet. The first few days weren't fun, but I was religious about doing my daily workouts and

I was back to driving and normal daily life much more quickly than I expected.”

The mental part—as Apollo 15 Commander Scott experienced—is critical too. “It’s important to get back in ‘Earth mode’ from a psychological perspective,” says Virts. “For me, it was like a light switch: one day I was living in space, and as soon as I got back to Houston, I was just back to my normal life. It’s really important to have goals and things to look forward to down here, as you may or may not get another chance to fly in space.”

It’s way too early to say if Wilmore or Williams will fly again or whether their extended stay aboard the ISS will be their last trip off the Earth.

Astronaut Peggy Whitson holds the U.S. record for most cumulative days in space, at 675. Williams is now in the number two spot at 608 days, and Wilmore has logged a very considerable 464. That might be more than enough for any mortal—astronaut or not. If Wilmore and Williams indeed step away from space, they will do so having distinguished themselves in, as Ivins puts it, the most *off-nominal* of missions.

“Suni and Butch accepted the unexpected extension to their mission with such grace and humor,” she says. “Their demonstration of flexibility, adaptability, and optimistic versatility in folding seamlessly into the on-board crew is exactly what one should hope for from a career astronaut and makes me even more proud to call them my friends.”

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# Inside the Conviction of Iran's Would-Be Assassins in New York

Vick is an editor at large at TIME. He has also served as TIME's Jerusalem bureau chief. He has reported from 60 countries and in 2001 was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for coverage of the spread of AIDS in Africa.



On Thursday, after deliberating for less than four hours, a federal jury returned guilty verdicts against two Eastern European self-described gangsters hired by Iran to send a hit man to kill an Iranian dissident at her Brooklyn home. The intended victim, [Masih Alinejad](#), is a journalist and activist with nearly 9 million [Instagram](#) followers and the personal enmity of Iran's Supreme Leader, who calls her "the American agent."

The July 2022 plot was at least the third attempt on Alinejad’s life by Iran, and the trial marked the first time the regime’s assassination apparatus was laid out in detail in a U.S. courtroom. Until the *United States v. Rafat Amirov and Polad Omarov*, the Justice Department had issued indictments against Iranian officials that described their alleged [efforts to assassinate U.S. officials](#)—including Donald Trump and John Bolton, Trump’s National Security Advisor in his first term. But on the 24th floor of a lower Manhattan U.S. District courthouse, a string of FBI agents filled in the nitty gritty—detailing the forensic penetration of iPhones, Google accounts, WhatsApp messages, and search histories of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operatives hunting Alinejad.

Through a Google account opened in the name “Alex Peterson,” evidence showed, Brig. Gen. Ruhollah Bazghandi repeatedly searched “Masih Alinejad arrests” and “Masih Alinejad kidnapping plot.” (Iran had plotted to abduct Alinejad in 2020, the U.S. [charged](#) in an earlier indictment.) The general also searched his own name and, 93 times in a span of 18 months, looked up “US sanctions on IRGC intelligence officers,” of which [he is the subject](#).

Other Iranian intelligence operatives repeatedly searched “Rafat the thief”—the nickname of Amirov, who resided in Iran at the time and according to prosecutors, was the mob’s point of contact for Iranian intelligence. (Amirov photos, ID cards, and airline tickets were found on an Iranian operative’s phone.) It was unclear how much of the \$500,000 Iran had promised for killing Alinejad had been transferred to the mobsters. But after their hitman was arrested near her house on July 28, 2022, with an assault rifle and a ski mask, the Iranians wanted it back.

“This is addressed to you, your boss and mafia,” read a text message to the operative handling Amirov’s gang, dated Oct. 4, a Tuesday. “If the job gets no result by Saturday, there will be nothing left to say between us, and you will lose the job. Additionally, you must return the deposit or else you will have to face the consequences. Until Saturday then.”

All the telltale data was harvested from phones confiscated when the mobsters were arrested or handed over by U.S.-based internet companies that responded to FBI search warrants. (In the digital realm, American law

enforcement enjoys home-field advantage.) In the courtroom, the cumulative effect proved overwhelming. In closing arguments, Amirov’s lawyer acknowledged that the government’s digital narrative “points in my client’s general direction,” and could only argue that no evidence proved it was Amirov’s thumbs that sent the more damaging texts. He also pointed to what he described as gaps in the prosecutor’s technical case.

But just as the gangsters put their faith in the would-be hitman to carry out the plot, their lawyers turned to him for a defense.

Khalid Mehdiyev, 27, testified for the government. “I was there to try to kill the journalist,” he announced on the stand, then spent hours cheerfully acknowledging the criminal implications of the messages and images on his phone, including a distinctive screenshot of Alinejad’s address that also was on the phone of an Iranian operative.

But Mehdiyev, a hulking presence referred to as “the fat one” in his bosses’ messages, also proved useful to defense lawyers. They pointed out that he had incentive to accommodate the FBI, which had relocated his family to the U.S. from his native Azerbaijan and offered what Omarov’s attorney called “the golden ticket” of remaining in the U.S. after serving a reduced sentence. That attorney, Elena Fast, devoted her entire closing argument to the former pizza delivery driver, who claimed to have testified truthfully about the plot but acknowledged lying about everything from the facts of his visa application to whether his mother was alive (she is, and testified that she’d been threatened by Omarov; Fast told jurors she should have won an Oscar).

Fast argued that Omarov and Mehdiyev, after divvying up a \$30,000 advance from Iran, never intended to kill Ahlinejad. “This was a scam,” she said. “They wanted to make some money here—scamming the Iranians, scamming Amirov.

Alinejad testified to a packed courtroom on Wednesday. Since moving to the U.S. in 2009, the journalist has emerged as a prominent dissident, with a large following inside Iran, especially among young women who understand the regime’s enforcement of compulsory hijab, or modest dress, as shorthand for all its misogynist laws. Iran’s [most recent](#) attempt on her

was in 2024, when, according to a U.S. indictment, Iran engaged an Afghan to arrange the assassination of both her and Trump.

“They wanted Ms. Alinejad dead, not in the witness box,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael D. Lockard.

Appearing with her signature yellow blossom in a towering nimbus of hair, Alinejad explained that she had been out of town for most of the time that Mehdiyev was staking out her street. On the day they overlapped, she was alarmed to lock eyes with him while looking out a front window. “He was in my sunflowers, staring into my eyes. I got really panicked,” she said, and she ducked out of the house with a friend. Mehdiyev soon fled as well and was arrested after running a stop sign.

Most of Alinejad’s testimony was about Iran’s animus toward her. “I’ve been accused of being CIA, Mossad, MI6,” she said, naming intelligence agencies of Israel and the U.K. In the courtroom, the most chilling statement of Tehran’s intentions was a [cartoon](#) on the front page of a state-owned newspaper the day after Iranians turned out for a “women in white” protest Alinejad had organized on social media. The newspaper, controlled by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, depicted Alinejad cowering in fear beneath the captive forms of two dissidents the regime had lured back to Iran from exile and executed. The caption reads, in Persian: “Next. Be Ready.”

Alinejad struggled for composure speaking of the executed activists. “Both of them were kidnapped by the Iranian regime,” she said.

In digital messages entered into evidence, the mobsters referred to their target as “the whore.” Their attorneys, however, showed Alinejad only respect, and they joined prosecutors in a statement stipulating as unchallenged fact that Iran operated assassination campaigns. “Her testimony, as courageous as it was, illustrated the contrast between Iran’s system and ours,” Michael Martin, who represented Amirov, told the jury in closing. “Presumption of innocence is one way in which we distinguish ourselves from Iran.”

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# How to Relax and Unwind Without Drinking Alcohol

Haupt is a health and wellness editor at TIME. She covers happiness and actionable ways to live well.



Alcohol has [long been](#) synonymous with relaxation. If you want to unwind after a rough day at work—or kick back on the couch, at a baseball game, or in the pool—there's historically been a good chance you'll have a drink in hand.

Now, the tides are turning. In early January, then-U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued [a report](#) warning that even small amounts of alcohol can cause cancer. Drinking just one alcoholic beverage a day increases the risk of liver cirrhosis, esophageal cancer, oral cancer, and various injuries, a federal [analysis](#) suggests. According to [a recent survey](#), nearly half of

Americans are trying to cut back on their alcohol consumption in 2025—a 44% increase since 2023. The message is especially getting through to young Americans, who [increasingly view less as more](#), leading the charge among age groups going dry.

As the science around alcohol's health risks crystallizes, a new question is brewing: What are you supposed to do to relax and unwind and escape your mental headspace if you ditch booze? Is there a healthier way to turn off your brain temporarily or shift into a happier place—and if so, how do you achieve it?

"It's a major dilemma," says Dr. Anna Lembke, chief of the Stanford Addiction Medicine Dual Diagnosis Clinic and author of [Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in the Age of Indulgence](#). She works with people struggling with alcohol use disorder, who have to give up drinking altogether. They often wrestle with "what to do to relax to deal with their negative emotions, and to have fun, because alcohol is what they've relied on to achieve those goals," she says. "It's a real challenge, because many of the alternatives are also addictive, like scrolling online. The risk of cross-addiction is huge."

We asked experts why it's so hard to figure out what to replace alcohol with—and to share their favorite ideas on how to relax booze-free.

## **How does alcohol affect the brain, anyway?**

Alcohol affects many different organs, but one of its primary targets is the brain. That's "one of the reasons why we like it," Lembke says. It acts as a central nervous system depressant, which means it slows brain activity, causing your muscles to relax and making you feel calm. It can elevate mood, curb anxiety, relieve pain, and make social situations more fun and enjoyable.

Yet over time, "alcohol really impacts how our brain and body perceive and experience relief and reward, particularly as drinking becomes more of a habit," says Marilyn Piccirillo, a psychologist with the Rutgers Addiction Research Center. "People find they've gotten into the habit of drinking for

stress relief, or to make situations even better, and then without alcohol, those situations become less rewarding.” If you drink often, you’ll start to need even more alcohol to achieve the same pleasurable feeling, and you’ll begin to experience a muted response to all the things you once enjoyed, because they won’t compare to the “reward” of drinking. That can lead to addiction and compulsive drinking, Piccirillo adds.

**Read More:** [Why, Exactly, Is Alcohol So Bad for You?](#)

It’s no surprise, then, that even if it feels good in the moment, most experts don’t consider drinking a healthy way to escape real life. It’s a “maladaptive coping strategy,” says Lara Ray, a psychologist who runs the UCLA Addictions Laboratory. “A lot of people end up using alcohol excessively because they’re trying to cope with stressors—be it family or romantic relationships, or financial stressors.” But that’s not going to benefit you over the long run, which is why instead, it’s smart to look for an alternative. “It should be healthier than alcohol, and you should have multiple outlets,” Ray says. “We’re substituting this ineffective coping strategy—‘I’m so stressed, so I drink’—with an effective coping strategy, which is ‘I’m stressed, so maybe I talk to my partner, I talk to my friends, I call my therapist.’”

## Why it’s so hard to find a satisfying escape

You’ve seen the memes about parents who grab a glass of wine—their “[mommy juice](#)”—as a way to cope with another chaotic day. That image speaks to one reason why alcohol is such a convenient escape: You can do it alongside whatever else you’re doing, says Hayley Treloar Padovano, an associate professor of behavioral and social sciences at the Center for Alcohol and Addiction Studies at Brown University. Other coping strategies—like hiking a gorgeous trail—might be more difficult to integrate into your daily routine. “If I’m going to go do yoga, my kids can’t be climbing all over me,” she says. “But they could be climbing all over me as I’m sipping on a glass of wine.”

That’s why Treloar Padovano suggests brainstorming activities or habits you can easily build into your day, like texting or calling a friend, playing a

game, or turning on an upbeat playlist when you get home. Keeping busy is essential, she says; time that was spent drinking needs to be filled with something else, so make a list of ideas. “The bottom line is that if we’re going to remove something, we need to put something else in its place,” she says. You’ll need to put effort into planning ahead, Treloar Padovano adds, especially for situations in which you would typically drink.

**Read More:** [\*Do You Really Store Stress in Your Body?\*](#)

As you reflect on possible alcohol alternatives, try not to gravitate toward harmful replacements. Some people, for instance, trade alcohol for marijuana. “I’m not trying to be a teetotaler on either one of these things,” Treloar Padovano says. “It might work for you, but it really is a slippery slope into that becoming the thing that then causes problems for you.”

It’s also a good idea to keep expectations in check, since new types of relaxation probably aren’t going to have an instant effect. Throughout the adjustment period, remind yourself why you decided to cut back. “If I’m used to feeling immediate relief by pouring a glass of wine, even before I have a drink of it, I may not feel that same immediate relief when I pour a glass of seltzer and put lime in it,” Treloar Padovano says. Instead of giving up on your sparkling drink, focus on what you’re getting out of it. “Maybe the benefit in the moment isn’t going to be as strong,” she says. “But if I play the tape through my head to the end, I know I’m not going to feel hungover tomorrow. I’m not going to yell at my kids later. There’s a trade-off, and it may not be to the level that you had it, but it’ll be enough to get you by.”

## 5 ways to relax without alcohol

Figuring out how to unwind without alcohol is individual, experts stress—not every idea will work for every person.

Lembke has worked with many people who find it hard to believe they’ll get to a point where they will be able to enjoy supposedly relaxing alternatives to alcohol. But with time, many are pleasantly surprised. “There’s an enormous sense of freedom that they no longer have to rely on

this substance in order to function and feel—or *not* feel, as the case may be,” she says. It doesn’t happen overnight, but if you stick with it, “there’s a real self-actualization or improvement in psycho-spiritual well-being.”

Here are a few activities to consider.

### **Seek out (temporary, safe) pain**

Small doses of painful stimuli—like taking an ice or steam bath, fasting from food, or weightlifting—can be beneficial, [according to the scientific field of hormesis](#). These are “difficult, painful, or challenging in the moment, but make us feel better afterwards,” Lembke says. When you [subject yourself to a healthy form of pain](#), your body senses injury, and in response to that, increases production of neurotransmitters like dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin, she explains. “We make all of these feel-good chemicals within our own brain,” she says. “We don’t actually need to go outside to look for them—we can find ways to activate them in our own minds.”

### **Find your own way into the mind-body world**

When Lembke encourages people to think about healthy and adaptive ways to de-stress, she often points them to [mind-body activities](#) like prayer, meditation, Tai chai, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, and [breathwork](#). These types of practices help you connect with your physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts—which means instead of using alcohol to distract yourself from your inner world, you’ll learn to tolerate even the most uncomfortable moments. [Research suggests](#) mindfulness can spark positive changes in the brain, including lowered stress, anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions. “We are embodied creatures—we have bodies,” she says. “Often, drugs provide an embodied experience, but not necessarily a healthy one. So as an alternative, we can look for other embodied experiences that are generally not addictive and healthy—and there are lots of them.”

**Read More:** [How to Get Better at Doing Things Alone](#)

## **Reconnect with old interests and passions**

When you're trying to figure out what to do instead of drink, think broadly about what will satisfy your needs, Ray encourages. She's found that many people have luck [rediscovering long-forgotten hobbies](#), like running, cooking, or crafting. Plus, [research suggests](#) that people who regularly engage in hobbies have fewer symptoms of depression and better health, happiness, and life satisfaction than those who don't. "We want folks to draw upon their life experiences and see, what do they find rewarding?" Ray says. "It could be volunteering; it could be playing volleyball."

## **Treat yourself**

Keep track of the money you would have spent buying alcohol, and buy yourself something nice instead, Treloar Padovano suggests. Put whatever you save into a relaxation fund, and use it to splurge on a spa day, massage, super comfortable weighted blanket—you name it. "Maybe you've always wanted to be someone who was able to get their nails done every week, but you just decided you didn't have the money," she says. "Well, now you're not drinking, and with the money you're saving, you can get your nails done every week."

## **Socialize more than you normally would**

If you're used to drinking in social situations, think through whether there are people in your network who are booze-free—or situations where you're less likely to crack open a beer. Maybe you have friends who don't drink, Piccirillo says, and you can start to prioritize plans with them. You might find you enjoy outings like walking in the park or going to the movies.

In general, [leaning into your friendships](#) is one of the best ways to relax without alcohol. Meaningful human connections "release dopamine and opioids in our brain," Lembke says. "We are social creatures—we're wired to connect—so replacing alcohol with deep and intimate human connections is a good and healthy substitute for drinking."

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# What the Venezuelans Deported to El Salvador Experienced

Holsinger is an American photojournalist based out of Nashville, Tenn.



On the night of Saturday, March 15, three planes touched down in El Salvador, carrying 261 men deported from the United States. A few dozen were Salvadoran, but most of the men were Venezuelans the Trump Administration had [designated as gang members and deported, with little or no due process](#). I was there to document their arrival.

For more than a year, I have been embedded throughout El Salvador's society, working on a book chronicling the country's transformation. From the huts of remote island fishermen to the desk of the President, from elite homicide detective units to elementary school classrooms, I have interviewed government officials and everyday people, collecting stories that

would shock Stephen King. I've stood in classrooms full of happy students which not long ago were empty, because children here once learned early that schools were places to be raped or recruited. I've interviewed killers in prison and sat with them face-to-face.

[video id=dMFVrBtH autostart="viewable"]

As I stood on the tarmac, an agent with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's ICE Special Response Team told me that some of the Venezuelans had weakly attempted to take over their plane upon landing. It wasn't unusual for detainees to try to make a last stand, the agent said, guarding the doorway to the plane at the top of the gangway stairs. "They began to try to organize to overthrow the plane by screaming for everyone to stand up and fight. But not everyone was on board," the agent said, cautioning me to be careful because some of the Venezuelans would fight once they were offloaded.





Even if not fighting, almost all the detainees came to the door of the plane with angry, defiant faces. It was their faces that grabbed me, because within a few hours those faces would completely transform.

The Venezuelans emerging from their plane were not in prison clothes, but in designer jeans and branded tracksuits. Their faces were the faces of guys who in no way expected what they first saw—an ocean of soldiers and police, an entire army assembled to apprehend them.





One of the alleged organizers of the attempted overthrow fought the U.S. agents on the plane, cursing the Americans, the Salvadorans, [President Nayib Bukele](#) himself. El Salvador's Minister of Defense, René Merino, who had been standing on the tarmac at the bottom of the gangway, rushed aboard, dragged the guy to the gangway himself, and flung him into the waiting hands of black-masked guards.



The transfer from the plane to the buses that would carry them to prison was rapid, yet it might as well have been the crossing of an ancient continent. I felt the detainees' fear as they marched through a gauntlet of black-clad guards, guns raised like the spears of some terrible tribe. I walked the line of buses waiting to depart, photographing faces. A guard noticed one of the detainees turned toward the window and wrenched his head back down into his chest.



Around 2 a.m., the convoy of 22 buses, flanked by armored vehicles and police, moved out of the airport. Soldiers and police lined the 25-mile route to the prison, with thick patrols at every bridge and intersection. For the few Salvadorans, it was a familiar landscape. But for a Venezuelan plucked from America, it must have appeared dystopian—police and soldiers for miles and miles in woodland darkness.

The Terrorism Confinement Center, a [notorious maximum-security prison](#) known as CECOT, sits in an old farm field at the foot of an ancient volcano, brightly lit against the night sky. I've spent considerable time there and know the place intimately. As we entered the intake yard, the head of prisons was giving orders to an assembly of hundreds of guards. He told them the Venezuelans had tried to overthrow their plane, so the guards must be extremely vigilant. He told them plainly: Show them they are not in control.



The intake began with slaps. One young man sobbed when a guard pushed him to the floor. He said, “I’m not a gang member. I’m gay. I’m a barber.” I believed him. But maybe it’s only because he didn’t look like what I had expected—he wasn’t a tattooed monster.

The men were pulled from the buses so fast the guards couldn’t keep pace. Chained at their ankles and wrists, they stumbled and fell, some guards falling to the ground with them. With each fall came a kick, a slap, a shove. The guards grabbed necks and pushed bodies into the sides of the buses as they forced the detainees forward. There was no blood, but the violence had rhythm, like a theater of fear.

Inside the intake room, a sea of trustees descended on the men with electric shavers, stripping heads of hair with haste. The guy who claimed to be a barber began to whimper, folding his hands in prayer as his hair fell. He was slapped. The man asked for his mother, then buried his face in his chained hands and cried as he was slapped again.



After being shaved, the detainees were stripped naked. More of them began to whimper; the hard faces I saw on the plane had evaporated. It was like looking at men who passed through a time machine. In two hours, they aged 10 years. Their nice clothes were not gathered or catalogued but simply thrust into black garbage bags to be thrown out with their hair.

They entered their cold cells, 80 men per cell, with steel planks for bunks, no mats, no sheets, no pillow. No television. No books. No talking. No phone calls and no visitors. For these Venezuelans, it was not just a prison they had arrived at. It was exile to another world, a place so cold and far from home they may as well have been sent into space, nameless and forgotten. Holding my camera, it was as if I watched them become ghosts.



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# How TIME and Statista Determined the Top GreenTech Companies of 2025



This year, TIME has published the second annual list of [America's Top GreenTech Companies](#) alongside the inaugural list of the [World's Top GreenTech Companies](#), both in partnership with Statista, a leading global provider of market and consumer data and rankings. These quantitative studies spotlight the companies driving the transition to a greener future in the United States and globally. Here's how the winners were selected.

## Methodology

The research projects “America’s Top GreenTech Companies 2025” and “World’s Top GreenTech Companies 2025” are comprehensive analyses

conducted to identify the top-performing GreenTech companies in the United States and globally.

To be considered, a company's primary focus has to be on developing and providing green technologies, products, or services that help mitigate or reverse the impact of human activities on the environment. For the "America's Top GreenTech Companies 2025," only companies headquartered in the United States were eligible, while the global ranking included companies from around the world.

The studies are both built on three key pillars: positive environmental impact, innovation drive and financial strength. In each of these, a company received scores which were ultimately included into a final score. Statista gathered and scrutinized data for over 8,000 companies through desk research, online application forms, and collaborations with data and market intelligent companies.

To measure the positive environmental impact, Statista collaborated with HolonIQ to assess a company on the quality and impact of their product/service portfolio based on KPIs specific to each industry, such as carbon capture, offsets, and renewable energy generated.

For the financial strength dimension, Statista analyzed revenue, employee and funding data, obtained from publicly available sources like annual reports, company websites, through media monitoring, and via databases. Additionally, company disclosures submitted via an online application form, which was freely accessible via the TIME website, were considered.

For the innovation drive, Statista cooperated with LexisNexis® Intellectual Property Solutions to analyze the quantity and value of a company's IP (intellectual property) portfolio. The scoring is based on the Patent Asset Index featured in LexisNexis® PatentSight+.

Once the data was collected and evaluated, it was consolidated and weighted within a scoring model. The final score was calculated as follows: 45% x Impact score + 45% x Financial strength score + 10% x Innovation score. The 250 companies with the highest scores in each study were featured respectively on the "["America's Top GreenTech Companies of](#)

2025” ranking and the “World’s Top GreenTech Companies of 2025” ranking by TIME and Statista.

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# How Trump Revived Canada's Liberals

David Moscrop is a columnist, podcast host, and author of [\*Too Dumb for Democracy: Why We Make Bad Political Decisions and How We Can Make Better Ones?\*](#) He lives in Ottawa.



What a difference mere weeks have made in Canada. As the new year came and went, [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#) and his ruling Liberal Party, after nearly a decade in power, were trailing the Conservatives [by 25 points](#)—and facing electoral oblivion. An election was due by fall. It was looking like it might come earlier. The opposition parties in the House of Commons were [working](#) to bring down the government.

Today, Canada is in the midst of that early election, but the circumstances are night and day. Trudeau is gone, replaced by former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor [Mark Carney](#). And it was Carney himself who [called a snap election](#) for April 28. Most surprising of all, the Liberals are back up in the polls—and now [favored](#) to win. And it's all thanks to a brash American in the Oval Office.

The last three months have embodied the old maxim that “[events, dear boy, events](#)” can upset the odds in short order. After Donald Trump was elected in November, Canadians became nervous about what his second term might mean for the country. That it wouldn’t be anything good was obvious as early as December when Trump [bullied Trudeau](#), vowed sweeping tariffs, and even threatened annexation to make Canada the “[cherished 51st state.](#)”

With Trump’s taunts, the pressure on the highly unpopular Trudeau to step aside only grew. Canada needed a new, full-time and focused leader, with plenty of runway to deal with Trump and his bid for [hemispheric dominance](#). So Trudeau announced his resignation on Jan. 6, the date Trump’s win was certified. A short Liberal leadership race followed in March, and Carney became Prime Minister. On Sunday, he called a snap election as voters are rallying around the flag and the incumbent Liberals, and against the Yankee menace.

The Liberal leadership race was centered on who could best deal with Trump and Canada’s (erstwhile?) ally. The general election will share that focus.

Canada has already shot back at the U.S. with [reciprocal](#) 25% tariffs. As a more sweeping round of Trump-induced duties [looms](#), Carney is promising to fight back. It was hard to miss that his first foreign trip as Prime Minister was to France and the U.K., and Carney has [said](#) Canada won’t enter U.S. trade talks until Trump drops the 51st state talk—and [show some respect](#).

**Read More:** [How Canada Got Hooked on the U.S. Economy](#)

That hard talk seems to be paying off in a land where voters are [boozing](#) the U.S. national anthem, [canceling](#) vacations down south, and [boycotting](#) American goods.

It's no accident that Carney launched his campaign on Sunday asking for a "[strong, positive mandate](#)" to deal with Trump not long after announcing a [review](#) of Canada's plan to purchase F-35 fighter jets from the American arms manufacturer Lockheed Martin, a contract worth tens of billions. Canadians are furious at Trump and the U.S., and Carney is deftly seizing that anger—and leaving [Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre](#) in an awkward spot.

Poilievre has [promised to stand up to Trump](#), arguing he's a "[tough guy](#)" who can handle the U.S. President. But he's seen by many as a "[Trump-inspired](#)" figure and the Liberals are working overtime to paint him as [Maple MAGA](#). His [base](#) is typically Trump-friendly, even if most Canadians aren't. Those same Canadians also see Carney's Liberals as [better suited](#) to handle Trump, with 43% of them worried Poilievre would "roll over" to the President's demands.

Unfortunately for Poilievre, Trump is the defining election issue given how crucial the bilateral relationship is to Canada's prosperity and security.

Canada and the U.S. have a close defense relationship, with joint membership in NATO and NORAD, the continental aerospace command. The countries share national security information, though Trump has mused about [kicking Canada out](#) of the Five Eyes intelligence network.

Trade between the U.S. and Canada is worth over \$1 trillion Canadian a year. That trade employs about [8 million Americans](#), and Canada is the [leading export partner](#) for 32 states—sending essential goods like potash, uranium, aluminum, and critical minerals. The U.S. auto sector is also intimately connected with Canada's, and accounts for [3% of U.S. GDP](#). But the economic relationship is nonetheless lopsided, which makes Canada especially vulnerable.

With Canada's economy, defense, and even sovereignty on the line, it's no surprise that the election is about Trump and who can best handle him—and how. But it's still a shock to witness the ultra-rapid revival of a Liberal Party that was written off as moribund not so long ago.

If the Liberals do indeed survive and hold on to power come April 28, they will have Trump to thank—but they'll also have him to deal with.

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# Why Turkey's Pro-Democracy Protests Probably Won't Succeed

*Ian Bremmer is a foreign affairs columnist and editor-at-large at TIME. He is the president of Eurasia Group, a political-risk consultancy, and GZERO Media, a company dedicated to providing intelligent and engaging coverage of international affairs. He teaches applied geopolitics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, and his most recent book is [The Power of Crisis](#).*



Once again, Turkey faces [political turmoil](#). Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu of Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) was [detained on March 19](#) and then formally arrested on March 23. He stands accused of a host of poorly evidenced charges: "establishing and managing a criminal organization, taking bribes, extortion, unlawfully recording personal data, and rigging a tender." Imamoglu, who called the

charges a “[black stain on our democracy](#),” has also been suspended from his position as mayor. If convicted, as is expected, he will not be allowed to run for President.

Despite this, the CHP, which says the arrest is [politically motivated](#), held its previously scheduled primary and [named Imamoglu as its presidential candidate](#) for the 2028 election. Meanwhile, protests [continue to rock Turkey](#). Police have moved to try to contain them in [Istanbul](#), the largest city; [Ankara](#), the capital; Izmir; and other cities around the country.

We’ve seen this scenario before. Erdogan has now been in power for 22 years, and he intends to remain there. He has tightened his government’s control of the military, which launched a [failed coup](#) against him in 2016, the country’s justice system, and its media. Against that backdrop, the arrest of the candidate most likely to defeat Erdogan is unsurprising. When Imamoglu was first elected Istanbul’s mayor in 2019, Erdogan claimed the election had been stolen and [ordered a do-over](#). But Imamoglu won the rerun by a wider margin, and the CHP has [since won control](#) of every major city in Turkey.

Erdogan is calculating that he can ride out the protests. He’s done it before. When his government announced in the summer of 2013 that Istanbul’s Gezi Park, one of the city’s few green spaces, was to be redeveloped to include a rebuilt Ottoman military barracks and a shopping mall, [demonstrators began occupying the park](#). When police launched a harsh crackdown on those who had set up tents, public anger at Erdogan’s response triggered startlingly intense nationwide protests. Erdogan was able to let them pass, and nearly a dozen years later, he has a much firmer grip on the country.

Still, CHP leader Ozgur Ozel and other opposition politicians are trying to keep Imamoglu’s story in the public eye by [mobilizing](#) the CHP’s 1.7 million members. On March 24, Ozel [called](#) for a boycott of any media outlet that refuses to cover the protests. It will once again accuse Erdogan of using the power of the state against Turkey’s democracy. But the Turkish President’s ability to quell those protests make any threat to his government unlikely to succeed.

By March 27, nearly 1,900 protesters had been arrested since Imamoglu's detention. Erdogan himself has accused demonstrators and protest organizers of stirring unrest to "disturb the peace and polarize our people." The government has so far largely tolerated the mass protests in Istanbul, where hundreds of thousands have been gathering. But elsewhere around the country, further from the public eye, they look set to be suppressed by any means necessary. There are also moves to push opposition voices off social media.

Erdogan isn't facing much international pressure to change course. The European Commission has issued a statement calling on Erdogan's government to "[uphold democratic values](#)," but it doesn't have leverage here. Turkey's President has a strong relationship with Donald Trump. All who want less volatility in the Middle East also want Erdogan to help stabilize the new government in Syria, and Europe wants NATO member Turkey to back its security guarantees for a [ceasefire in Ukraine](#).

Imamoglu's arrest marks one more big step toward authoritarianism in Turkey, where democracy already came with an asterisk.

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# There's a New Pill to Treat UTIs

Park is a senior health correspondent at TIME. She covers the COVID-19 pandemic, new drug developments in cancer and Alzheimer's disease, mental health, HIV, CRISPR, and advances in gene therapy, among other issues in health and science. She also covers the Olympics and co-chaired TIME's inaugural TIME 100 Health Summit in 2019. Her work has won awards from the New York Press Club and recognition from the Deadline Club. In addition, she is the author of [\*The Stem Cell Hope: How Stem Cell Medicine Can Change Our Lives\*](#). Follow her on Instagram at [@aliceparktime](#).



Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are among the most common medical issues women experience; up to [60%](#) of women will get one during their lifetime. Older, post-menopausal women are especially susceptible, since lower estrogen levels can lead to decreased levels of beneficial bacteria that suppress infection-causing bacteria.

On March 25, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the first new antibiotic to treat UTIs in 30 years. The medication, gepotidacin, targets *E. coli* bacteria, which is responsible for the most common types of infections, called uncomplicated UTIs, that affect women.

Called Blujepa, the drug works differently than existing antibiotics. It targets two enzymes that *E. coli* uses to make more copies of itself when it generates and snips off circles of its DNA. During that process, the DNA can become knotted, but the bacteria can undo those knots. Blujepa interferes with that process, which prevents the bacteria from replicating and producing more bacteria that can infect cells.

**Read More:** [\*Menopause Is Finally Going Mainstream\*](#)

Tony Wood, chief scientific officer at GSK (which makes Blujepa), said during a press briefing that this process is unique to *E. coli* bacteria, and the fact that the drug focuses on this unique property could make it harder for the bacteria to develop resistance against the drug. Existing antibiotics that are used to treat UTIs have broad activity against a number of bacterial species—which makes it more likely that bacteria can find ways to develop resistance to them.

In two large trials of the drug that the FDA reviewed for approval, Blujepa was as good as or slightly better than another commonly prescribed antibiotic for UTIs, nitrofurantoin. Blujepa successfully treated 50% and 58% of women, respectively, in the two studies with infections, compared to nitrofurantoin's success rate of 43% and 47%.

GSK is also studying the drug against other *E. coli* infections in the body, including gonorrhea, Wood says.

In addition, the company is working on another antibiotic to treat complicated UTIs, in which the infection spreads beyond the bladder and into other tissues. These infections often require hospitalization and a longer course of treatment. That drug could potentially help keep people out of the hospital or reduce their stay if they do need more intensive care.

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# Rep. Jake Auchincloss: Democrats Are ‘Bereft of Big Ideas’

Alter is a senior correspondent at TIME. She covers politics, social movements, and generational change, and hosts TIME's Person of the Week podcast. She is also the author of [The Ones We've Been Waiting For: How a New Generation of Leaders Will Transform America](#). Her work for TIME has won a Front Page Award from the Newswoman's Club of New York and has been nominated for a GLAAD Media award.



*This article is part of The D.C. Brief, TIME’s politics newsletter. Sign up [here](#) to get stories like this sent to your inbox.*

Rep. Jake Auchincloss’s Massachusetts district is so safe he didn’t even face a Republican opponent in 2024. So while some of his Democratic colleagues are focused on the careful messaging needed to appease swing

voters or keep their purple seats, Auchincloss, 37, is fixated on the broader question facing his party: what are the big ideas that Democrats can offer the American people? TIME spoke to the rising House Democrat about owning up to the party's COVID-era mistakes, getting tough on social-media companies, building new cities, and what the Democratic vision of the future should be.

*This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.*

## **What went wrong for Democrats, and how can it be fixed?**

It's encapsulated in the school closures. The school closures were a catastrophe. Those are elementary school kids who didn't learn reading and writing because it was on Zoom. That's high school kids who missed out on baseball practice. That's college kids who didn't get to enjoy the college experience. And what defined those school closures was a condescension, it was an inflexibility, and it was a resistance to feedback about the effects of our government's decisions. It was this toxic confluence of smugness with inflexibility, and frankly, poor governance.

Democrats need to acknowledge that we were wrong as a party on our stance on school closures. It's not enough to say we were wrong on this. We also have to have a plan of action for how we're gonna remediate it.

## **What do you think that plan should be?**

I think it's twofold. One is we should make a commitment of one-on-one, high-dosage tutoring for every kid who's behind grade level in this country. We know it's one of the few educational interventions that are rigorously tested for efficacy. It's scalable, it's complimentary to the work that teachers are already doing, and we should be saying as a matter of party principle: every single kid who's behind grade level, Democrats are here to ensure that they get one-on-one, high-dosage tutoring.

The second thing we should do is hold the social-media corporations to account for their generational attention fracking of our youth. I have legislation that's bipartisan to revoke Section 230, and make social-media corporations accountable to a duty of care for things like deepfake

pornography that target young women. But we gotta go even further, and tax the daylights out of these social-media corporations. A 50% tax rate on all digital advertising that they accrue on the revenues. And use it to fund initiatives like local journalism and education.

### **Does the party need a new direction? What should that direction be?**

That's the core challenge we have. It's that we are bereft of big ideas. And that's what I'm worried about. Everyone's focused on 'we need a new message frame' or 'we need we need a new angle' or 'we need new leaders to emerge.' I can assure you there is no shortage of ambition out there, candidates will emerge. There's a shortage of ideas. It's all kind of hand waving unless you actually have some big ideas. Let's put the big ideas out there. Let's talk about them. Let's see what people will get excited about. And then organically, I think a narrative starts to emerge from that.

And this is to a certain extent what MAGA did and Donald Trump did. He came out talking about 'build the wall,' right? We forget, 'build the wall' was the foundation of MAGA, which has since engendered many other ideas and narratives. But you can see why it's kind of the intellectual genesis of that movement.

### **So what should be the Democrats' next big ideas?**

Let me put a few more out there. We have got to stop focusing on expanding health-care coverage and focus instead on lowering health-care costs. Community health clinics account for about 1% of U.S. health care spending, but they treat 10% of Americans. They are primary and preventative care and if they could team up with hospitals in particular, they can be incredibly effective stewards of health care dollars. We have to start subsidizing them directly, as opposed to what we currently do, which is subsidize the health-insurance companies. For 15 years we've been subsidizing health-insurance companies, and they keep on telling us everyone's going to get healthier, and all I see is that they get richer. How do we subsidize these community health centers? How about a value-added tax on junk food, in the way that the Navajo Nation has. The Navajo Nation put a tax on junk food. It's modest, but they've used it to fund wellness initiatives. We could do that nationally.

So in the same way that we tie the attention tax to fund journalism and education, we tie the tax on junk food towards radically expanding funding to community health centers. So that everybody under 300% of the federal poverty rate has access to primary and preventative care.

### **What should be at the core of Democrats' economic agenda?**

Cost Disease needs to be the centerpiece. Our Democratic economic agenda really could be seven words: "treat cost disease and protect Social Security."

### **What is cost disease? Can you explain it to me like I'm five?**

Let's use two examples to explain it. The average family spends relatively less on TVs and electronics and relatively more on health care than they did 50 years ago. Why did that happen? The reason is that in sectors where they are able to do at-scale product manufacturing, the cost goes way down. In sectors that are very labor intensive, costs tend to go up over time. TVs got really cheap to make, and so a relative share of your budget they went down. Health care is very labor intensive, child care is very labor intensive, and so they, as a relative share of your budget, go up.

The goal then, if we're serious about treating cost disease in housing and health care, which are the two sectors that are most affected by it, is: how do you turn a service into a product and then how do you mass produce that product?

### **What does that mean for housing?**

We totally have to do land-use reform. We gotta make it easier to build. I'm here in Massachusetts, and it's impossible to build in this state with our zoning code. But we also have to figure out how to turn housing construction from a very service-intensive endeavor into a product. And we actually know how to do that: offsite construction.

One way to break through is for us to get serious about building new cities in this country that just totally bypassed the local zoning issue, right? Americans used to build new cities every time we ran into a river. We

stopped building new cities, but they're very important ways to foment economic dynamism and mobility. We've got lots of decommissioned military bases that are not locally zoned, federal land that's not locally zoned. Let's invest in building new cities there, and it'll open up lots of opportunities.

## **What other big ideas do you have?**

We need to get rid of the primary system. Get rid of the primary system like California did or Alaska did, try to limit the influence of big money like Maine is trying to do. Every state should be pushing for those reforms and Democrats should be leading the charge there. Because what that does is it unlocks the power of the median voter. Right now, of 435 members of Congress, only 35 of them are oriented towards the median voter. The other 400 are oriented towards their primaries.

**So if you take all these big ideas together and package them, how would you describe them? How would you explain this worldview to somebody if you didn't have time to go through each idea step by step?**

It's a great question, but I'm gonna reject the debate, actually. I am insistent that right now, we need to be talking about the ideas, the merits of the ideas. I am sure that some people will agree with what I'm putting forward. Some people will disagree. We need to be seeing what excites people. What actually galvanizes the electorate? What do people see as relevant to their lives?

What I'm very skeptical of is this top-down approach where the pollsters or the storytelling maestros of Democratic circles say, 'this message is what works, it's about fighting for the working class,' or whatever. Voters can tell.

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# Why Climate Change Is Making Greenland More Desirable to Trump

Shah is a reporter at TIME.



On Thursday, Second Lady Usha Vance will be visiting Greenland along with a U.S. delegation. The trip, the White House says, is meant to “celebrate Greenlandic culture and unity” with Vance scheduled to visit historical sites, learn about Greenlandic heritage, and attend Greenland’s national dogsled race. Trump’s national security advisor, Mike Waltz, and Energy Secretary Chris Wright are also expected to make a visit.

But the visit has been [condemned](#) by [Greenland’s leaders](#), especially as the Trump Administration has continued its brazen push for control of the

region. In a speech at the joint session of Congress on March 4, President Donald Trump spoke of the importance of letting the people of Greenland determine their own future [before admitting](#), “We need it really for international world security, and I think we’re going to get it one way or the other.”

The trip also comes as Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, is facing a new future in the face of climate change. Rising temperatures are accelerating the melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet, the largest ice mass in the Northern Hemisphere. The impact, coupled with warming oceans, has altered the area’s [ecosystems](#) and [food security](#).

On the surface, it seems these changes may be opening up new economic and strategic opportunities—ones the U.S. and others may want to tap. But the reality is more complicated than that.

“There’s a perceived military benefit and there’s a perceived economic benefit,” says Paul Bierman, professor of natural resources at the University of Vermont. Greenland is strategically located in the Atlantic Ocean between the U.S., Russia, and China, and contains a trove of natural resources—minerals, oil, and natural gas—that is largely untapped. But Bierman adds: “I actually think both of these [ideas] are false.”

## Natural Resources

There are 31 million barrels of undiscovered oil in East Greenland, according to a 2007 U.S. [Geological Survey study](#). And Greenland is home to minerals like lithium, niobium, and zirconium, all of which are useful for the production of batteries, electronics, and electric cars. But experts say that accessing these resources is not as easy as it sounds.

The reason much of the resources remain untapped is in part because they are not easily accessible. Greenland has a limited road network and a population of less than 60,000—and a large portion of the region is built on permafrost, which presents building challenges. “It’s a tricky ground to create infrastructure on,” says Asa Rennermalm, professor at the Department of Geography at Rutgers.

Climate change has spurred hopes of a mineral gold rush—as the receding ice could make accessing these natural resources easier. Many areas of Greenland, however, are currently closed off to extraction. In 2021, the territory’s parliament voted to stop oil and gas exploration due to environmental concerns, and also banned uranium mining that same year.

Greenland’s changing climate also holds potential for the U.S.’s artificial intelligence ambitions. During a Feb. 12 [Senate hearing](#) on the acquisition of Greenland, Rebecca Pincus, director of the Polar Institute at the Wilson Center, spoke of the potential for the melting ice sheet to provide the energy for hydropower-fueled AI data centers.

## A New Trade Route

Melting sea ice could open up a new trade route—one which President Trump seems to be vying for control over. “What we’re seeing globally in the Arctic is a dramatic decrease in the coverage of sea ice,” says Bierman. “And so as the Arctic Ocean has less and less sea ice, it potentially is open to vessels that are not icebreakers to get through.”

Trump’s former national security adviser Robert O’Brien has said that Greenland’s location is critical not only in its relation to China and Russia, but also as an alternative shipping route as climate change makes the [Panama Canal](#) more unreliable. Prolonged drought, exacerbated by climate change, has lowered water levels in the canal, making it harder for ships to pass through.

“[Greenland is] strategically very important to the Arctic, which is going to be the critical battleground of the future, because as the climate gets warmer, the Arctic is going to be a pathway that maybe cuts down on the usage of the Panama Canal,” O’Brien said in an [interview](#) with *Sunday Morning Futures* in December.

China and Russia launched a [joint shipping corridor](#) along the Arctic Sea in 2023—that year alone, 80 voyages reached Chinese ports through the route. “We have a lot of our favorite players cruising around the coast, and we have to be careful,” Trump [told](#) NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte earlier

this month, referring to the potential security risk that open Arctic waters might pose.

## Climate Risks

Experts say that the Trump Administration's focus is nearsighted—and ignoring a much bigger issue. The Arctic is warming [at a rate three to four times faster](#) than the rest of the world—and Greenland's ice sheet lost 2.5 million liters (over 660,000 gallons) of fresh water per second last year.

The melting ice sheets are not going to make resource extraction any easier. "There's this fantasy that the ice sheets are going to melt away overnight, and all these new exotic minerals are going to appear where they used to be a thousand feet of ice," says Bierman. "That's not going to happen."

Ice melt caused by climate change can trigger landslides, which can damage mining infrastructure in seconds. "It's going to destroy the port infrastructure, or, if you're unlucky enough, destroy your mine," says Bierman.

What's more, if Greenland's ice sheet were to melt completely, it would raise global sea levels by 23 ft. "Even just a fraction of that is going to have huge impacts on global sea level rise," says Rennermalm.

It will radically change the rest of the world—coasts from Mumbai to Mar-a-Lago could be underwater. "If we don't take care of that ice sheet. There are estimates in the many trillion dollars of economic losses if that happens, and that's going to eclipse any critical minerals," says Bierman. "That to me is the piece that doesn't fit in the four year political cycle."

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# I Wrote ‘Maid.’ Six Years Later, I Hired House Cleaners

*Land is the author of [Class: A Memoir of Motherhood, Hunger, and Higher Education](#) and [Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay and a Mother’s Will to Survive](#)*



In the six years since I [published Maid](#), almost every person who’s interviewed me has asked me the same question: Do I, a person who became kind of famous for writing about cleaning people’s houses, have a house cleaner myself?

The simple answer was no. But it was not because my house was already spotless. Far from it. The truth was, I just couldn’t bring myself to do it.

When I worked as a house cleaner, I spent hours dusting rooms with objects valuable enough to pay for a weeks’ worth of groceries that I desperately

needed. Everything I polished carried an invisible price tag with an obscene amount of money that had been spent. Receipts left on countertops for dry cleaning listed totals that were more than what I had paid for my car. A lot of the rooms I cleaned weren't even used regularly, so it became my job to dust closed-off spaces bigger than the studio apartment I lived in.

**Read More:** [I Left Poverty After Writing ‘Maid.’ But Poverty Never Left Me](#)

I worked for nine bucks an hour, and my take-home pay was about six. While the wages from the job allowed me to barely survive, the work itself seemed so wasteful and unnecessary that I started to feel that way about myself. My clients were pleasant for the most part, but a handful of them weren't. Regardless, a noticeable power imbalance weighed on me whenever I had to get on my hands and knees to clean the floors and toilets. To hire a house cleaner myself would not only mean putting someone in that position, where they, too, might feel worthless, but also becoming someone I used to hate.

My story is one of [living in poverty](#), struggling to afford housing and food. I used to stay up late at night, hungry and exhausted, fighting to complete assignments for college, hoping that one day I could support my young daughter in a way that did not involve pulling hair from a bathtub drain. When my first book became a bestseller, my unexpected success skyrocketed me into a [whole different class of society](#), namely one in which the inhabitants never had to worry if they would be able to pay the bill to heat their house. Suddenly, running out of shampoo was no longer a source of stress because I always had an extra bottle in a pantry. I had a whole shelf dedicated to toilet paper, something I used to steal from public restrooms because I couldn't afford to buy my own.

When my husband and I moved into our house, I told him I wanted to replace all of the cheap furniture and dishes I'd collected over the years from clearance racks and donations. When I received a large check for the [Netflix series based on my book](#) a few months after we moved in, I used it to furnish my whole house, down to the rainbow-colored Fiestaware dishes and Le Creuset cookware on display on the open shelves in the kitchen. My children's bedrooms were the parts I enjoyed being able to furnish the most. As a house cleaner, it pained me to know how other kids my daughter's age

lived, and now I was able to provide my own with a similar space, complete with bedding that matched and bed frames made from real wood.

**Read More:** [We Didn't Have Much Money. My Daughter Still Deserved Joy](#)

But I couldn't enjoy it, at least not entirely. My husband and I couldn't keep up on the mess our dogs and two daughters created. We also had a conflict of what we thought a clean house looked like. He had grown up in a house that most would call "lived-in" where mine could have been described as a sterile museum. My family didn't see the house as a never-ending list of tasks, but everywhere I looked, I saw work that needed to be done. My bedroom was over a crawl space, in which we stored junk we no longer needed but had not found the time to sort through, and I didn't have to see the grime and clutter to know it was there.

It was difficult to explain why this gave me such anxiety. But the constant awareness of the tasks needed to be done made it hard for me to relax, to focus, to work. I would recall the scene in Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* where a chef would press his palm on a cook's cutting board, which was "littered with peppercorns, spattered sauce, bits of parsley, bread crumbs and the usual flotsam and jetsam that accumulates quickly if not constantly wiped away with a moist cloth." He'd raise his hand, showing the cook all the debris he'd picked up, and admonish: "That's what the inside of your head looks like now. *Work clean!*"

And still I resisted hiring someone to help.

It was four years before my neighbor convinced me to call a friend of hers who owned a cleaning company. Originally, I was just looking for deep clean of the whole house, but the more I talked to the owner, the better I felt about hiring cleaners to help us keep up on the regular cleaning, too. She paid her employees a living wage, and if a client canceled, she offered them the same number of hours on another job to make up for it. This had always been the most stressful part of the job for me—I relied on the income, but my clients would cancel their service on a whim, leaving me out the 30 bucks that I needed to pay my electric bill.

When I told the owner I'd once worked for a company that forced us to clean every hard floor on our hands and knees, using two rags in a "wax on, wax off" motion from *The Karate Kid*, she laughed and shook her head, saying she tried to protect her employees from doing repetitive motions all day. She also mentioned that her teams used all-natural cleaners because she didn't want her employees to breathe in chemicals. I nodded and told her about the time I'd had to stop work and go to urgent care because I'd created a mixture of the wrong cleaning agents and accidentally inhaled a toxic cloud. "They tried to force me to do a drug test, too," I said. "I forgot about that."

A week after the walk-through, a team of four cleaners spent five hours in my house. I'd spent several days clearing the counters of piles of papers, markers, and glue sticks to make it easier to wipe the surface beneath them and picking up my youngest daughter's room as best I could. On the kitchen counter, I left a note to say thank you, and I tipped them all 50 bucks each. When I got home, my to-do list was no longer unending. I could make some adjustments – like putting away snow globes and other knickknacks that seemed unnecessary to be on display – but they were hardly all-consuming.

The company had a weekly spot available, so now I have two cleaners come to my house for two and half hours every Wednesday. I still spend part of Tuesday in preparation, making sure there aren't any dishes in the sink and sometimes doing an extra deep vacuum. I leave the cleaners 20 bucks each for a tip and get everyone out of the house before they get here. Though one time I was running late and talked to the first one to arrive—he'd been with the company for 10 years.

Last fall my husband and I separated for four months, and my whole life was in a sort of upheaval. My 10-year-old started sleeping with me at night, filling my bed with her favorite blankets and stuffed animals. Between work and caring for the kids, animals, and house on my own, there wasn't much left for me. But one day I walked into my bedroom and saw the beautiful way the cleaners had made my bed and arranged all the stuffed animals. It made me smile, then brought tears to my eyes. It was the first time someone had made a lot of effort to take care of me in weeks.

I went to the living room and, for once, I didn't feel the urge to scrub the whole place down. The work was done. I could breathe.

When I cleaned houses, I had just a few clients I truly felt I was helping. It's only now that I'm a client myself that I can see the value of the work I did at my former job. I wonder how many of my clients were able to take a full, relaxing breath on the days I had been in their homes. I bet it was all of them. All these years later, aware of the immense respect and gratitude I have for the hardworking people who clean my house, I am able to better appreciate the person I was back then and be proud of the work she did to take care of others.

Maybe the work I did was not actually wasteful and unnecessary after all. Maybe I wasn't either.

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# Rashid Johnson and the Fine Art of Anxiety

Luscombe is an editor at large at TIME, where she has covered a wide swath of topics but specializes in interviews, profiles, and essays. In 2010, she won the Council on Contemporary Families Media Award for her stories on the ways marriage is changing. She is also author of [\*Marriageology: the Art and Science of Staying Together\*](#).



Jan. 28, 1986, was a day that changed Rashid Johnson. He remembers the TV set being rolled into his elementary-school classroom in Evanston, Ill. He remembers watching with his classmates as the [space shuttle Challenger](#) flew into the air and transformed into a stream of white cloud. “I remember how that affected my thinking, recognizing that failure was possible amongst adults, amongst folks who we were supposed to trust,” says the artist, sitting

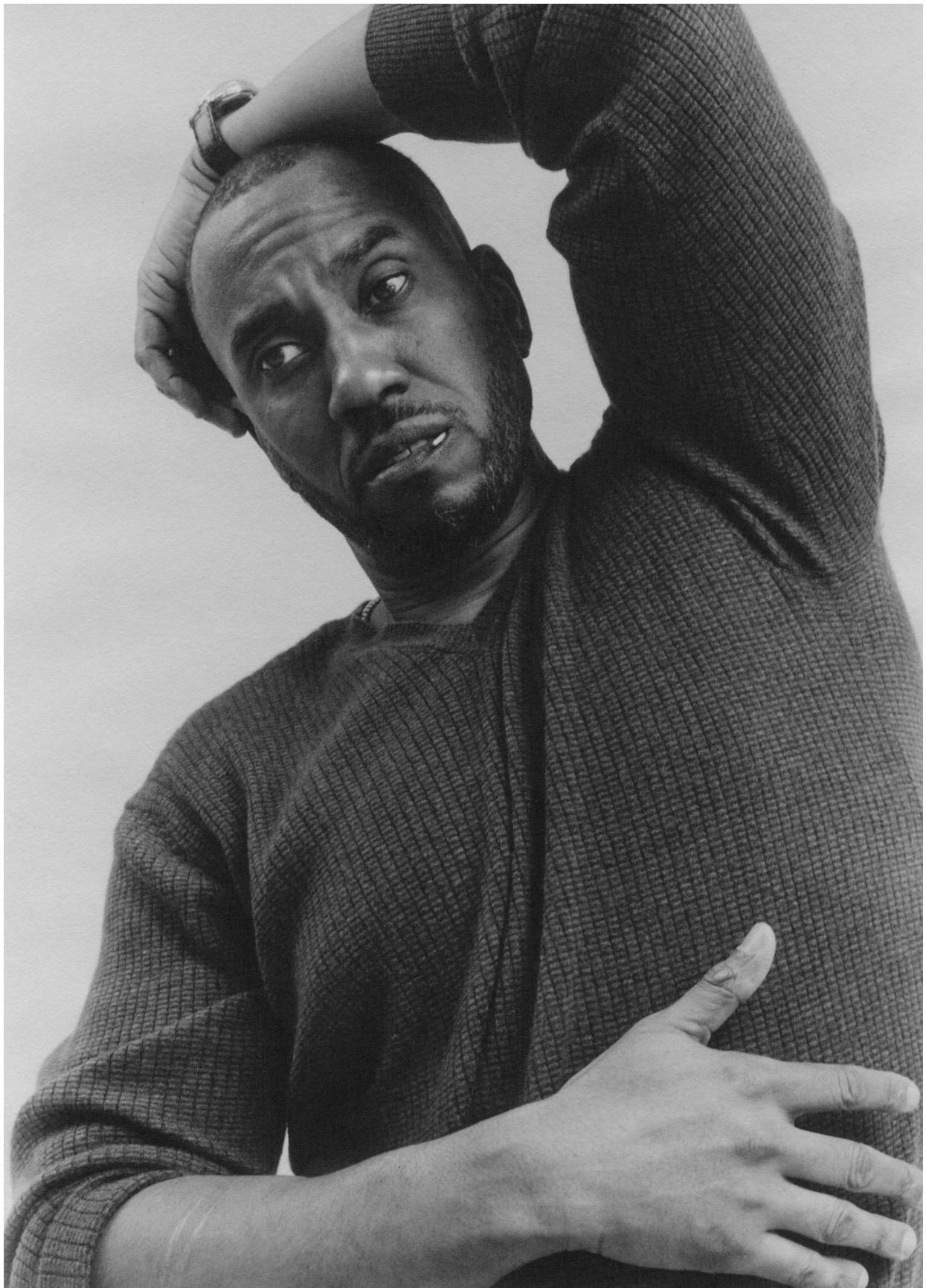
in his spacious Brooklyn studio, surrounded by works that are being prepared for a massive midcareer survey at the Guggenheim in New York City. “That was a big one for me.”

Seeing the footage of [Rodney King](#) being beaten by police in Los Angeles in 1991 also loomed large in Johnson’s life, as well as the acquittal of those officers of any wrongdoing, and the riots that followed. “I was in my young teenage years at that point,” says Johnson, now 47. “And becoming aware of the angst and anxiety and frustration of Black folks in America against the backdrop of what absolutely felt like incredibly unfair decisionmaking by the collective.”

The artist has lived through joyous moments in history too—two days before the *Challenger* explosion, the Bears won their first and only Super Bowl—but it’s the alarming ones that made the biggest impression. “I was an anxious kid,” he says. “I think what we’re exposed to at different stages in our lives absolutely informs how we see the world.”

Johnson has spent his career exploring, via his hands, what it means to be unsettled and what it means to be Black and what it means to be male and what it means to be Rashid Johnson, using whatever medium he finds inspiring at the time. His artworks, which include paintings, sculptures, mixed-media assemblages, mosaics, photographs, and film, are full of mood and foreboding. There’s beauty, humor, and exuberance as well. But it is the anxiety, especially as represented by a square-headed figure with whirlpool eyes and a frantically scribbled mouth, for which he is best known.

These days Johnson manages his anxiety in many ways. He’s extremely punctual. He works out daily. He goes to the Russian baths a couple of times a week. He has given up alcohol, is a regular at AA meetings, and frequently deploys the Serenity Prayer. He recently decided that he can trust the things he can’t control to God. Even so, as we speak he breaks out a packet of high-end Daneson toothpicks and chews on one. “This is born of an oral fixation after I quit smoking six years ago,” he says.



He also works that anxiety out through his art, in series with such titles as *Anxious Men*, *Broken Men*, *Anxious Red*, *Surrender Paintings*, and *Bruise Paintings*. The first of these was made in 2014, during the Black Lives Matter protests. He was a father by then and newly sober, so his reasons to worry increased just as he cut off access to his go-to liquid soothers. “I was thinking about my anxiety,” he says, “and kind of almost humorously depicting this character of anxiety, or trying to illustrate what anxiety might look like, through a set of wild gestures.”

The motif became newly relevant during the pandemic amid the stay-at-home measures and the increase in police-brutality videos that surfaced after [George Floyd’s murder](#). “When people were taking ownership of it,” he says, “I began to make crowds and groups of anxious men, because I recognized that it was a collective position.” Now the Anxious Man has become one of his signatures. And like Keith Haring’s Radiant Baby or Jean-Michel Basquiat’s crown, it has attained totem status; it’s on T-shirts, plates, and jewelry. Not only does Kendall Roy wear a \$30,000 dog-tag pendant with the image on it during his [“progressive” phase in Succession](#), the actor who plays him, [Jeremy Strong](#), owns another version of the necklace, with his daughters’ names and birthdays engraved on the back.

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**One thing Johnson has** rarely had to worry about is critical or commercial support. His solo show at the Guggenheim, “Rashid Johnson: A Poem for Deep Thinkers,” opens April 18, and will feature some 25 years of work, including photos he took in his early 20s, which were selected for [Thelma Golden’s](#) seminal “Freestyle” show at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2001. He has pieces in galleries and public spaces across the globe and has had solo shows on nearly every continent. His work is prized by collectors and keeps getting more valuable. (In November, a triptych of *Anxious Men* paintings sold for \$2.7 million at Christie’s.) He and his wife, the artist Sheree Hovsepian, have swoon-worthy houses in Manhattan’s Gramercy Park and the beach town of East Hampton. On the day TIME visits his studio, he is wearing a \$4,000 cashmere tracksuit and a \$200,000-plus Rolex Daytona Le Mans, which isn’t even his fanciest watch.

Golden exhibited Johnson's photographs of homeless men, which he'd printed using a 19th century technique known as Van Dyke brown, because she recognized "these deeply intimate and engaged portraits that felt old while they were at the very same time, very new," she says. "Van Dyke prints often indicate to us a certain sense of historic photography. Rashid, as a young artist, was taking that on in a way that I felt also showed how much he had looked at the history of photography and portraiture as a base."

Golden wasn't the only person who intuited Johnson's success early. McArthur Binion, a painter who took Johnson under his wing in the graduate program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, noticed right away that he had all the ingredients to make it big. "You have to have the right brain cells and the right support. Rashid is fourth-generation college-educated, and as a Black person in America, that's amazing," says Binion. But it wasn't just the education. "Pardon my French, but he has balls. He's smart. He's good-looking," says Binion. "He has a level of patience; he allows things to come to him."





Binion used to meet former students at a bar every second Wednesday. At one of those soirées a few years after Johnson graduated, Binion told him he could see his future. “I told him, ‘Next year you are gonna make at least \$100,000 from your art.’ And he laughed at me. He said, ‘No way,’” says Binion. “And he made \$200,000.”

“I’ve been rewarded in ways that I would never have expected to be rewarded as an artist,” says Johnson, who grew up more or less middle class. His mother Cheryl Johnson-Odim was a history professor and anti-apartheid activist in Chicago and is still a poet, and his father Jimmy Johnson owned an electronics company. “I’m grateful every time a work of mine is acquired,” he says. But he feels no obligation to feed the art market. “I don’t have to pander to that wealth creation.”

Things were different when he showed at Nicole Klagsbrun’s Manhattan gallery in 2008. A few days before the exhibit came down, nothing much had sold. The show was mostly photographs from Johnson’s *The New Negro Escapist Social and Athletic Club* series, faux-historical portraits of sharply dressed Black men one might find in an old-school club lounge, with names that evoke Black history such as Emmett and Thurgood. There was also a crosshair sculpture that referenced the logo of the band Public Enemy.

It seemed an unlikely venue for a breakthrough. “Nicole was located, like, on the sixth floor of some monster building,” says Mera Rubell, an influential collector and the co-founder of the Rubell museums. “You know, you get off the elevator and walk three miles inside the building to get to a door.” Rubell may be foggy on the location, but she has a crystal-clear recall of what she found behind that door.

“We walked in and we said, ‘Wait a minute. How is this possible, that this work is available?’” she says of the visit with her husband and co-founder Don and her son Jason, who works with them. “We just were kind of blown away. This is a talent that we didn’t know, which is what we live for.” They bought six pieces for their show “30 Americans,” which traveled to 17 other galleries, and they put one of Johnson’s photographs on the cover of the catalog. (They now own 22.) There’s never just one big break in an art career, but that was a good-size one.

Both Golden and the Rubells were drawn in by the work, but what really sealed the deal was meeting the artist. “He’s far more educated and sophisticated than most artists,” says Don, unable to resist jumping in on his wife’s speakerphone call from Miami. Johnson has a serious but friendly way of bringing people into his vision. “I’ve always tried to be really attentive to answering questions,” he says, “so that if there’s an audience in the future and they have the curiosity and the ambition and the enthusiasm to search out what I was thinking about around it, I’d provide the language.”

And while Johnson grew up around “wordy people”—his younger sister is also a poet and his older brother is a lawyer—he’s not precious about the way his art is talked about. “I really don’t like the idea that my project, even with all of its diversity and complexity, is opaque,” he says. “I want people to feel agency to talk about it, say what they feel when they see it, and to trust themselves.”



**The Guggenheim is something** of a homecoming for Johnson; he served on its board for seven years until 2023. (“While the idea of organizing an exhibition has been in progress for a long time, plans did not proceed until after Rashid’s tenure on the board was over,” says a museum spokesperson.) As he’s revisited his work and figured out how to display it best in the museum’s famous curved ramp, he’s had a chance to reflect on the many paths he’s explored.

These paths have included, so far, working with hair lotion, shea-butter soap, wax, shelving, at least one piano, mirrors, tiles, vinyl records, and old wooden floors as well as such conventional art products as oil paint and canvas. “My interests happen to consider both the aesthetic sensibility of an art object, how it can be rewarding to witness, and how it can be rewarding to think about in a more critical way,” he says. “That dichotomy is very specific to how I think.”

Take shea butter, for instance. Johnson grew up using the soap in his home. He saw it for sale in Afrocentric stores or on the street. “It became this tool that was understood as a representation of an Africanness,” he says. “But it also has a utility, it moisturizes your body. Some people, historically, would cook with it. So I became really interested in the material, and I found ways to deploy it.”

The show is also allowing him to revisit some old ideas, and to play with them. “There’s a body of work called *Cosmic Slops* that I was making around 2008 that were about incising and the removal of material and how you create lines,” he says. He points to two cream paintings in front of him. “These works, which I’m calling *Quiet Paintings*, are actually the children of those. They were finished yesterday.”

He seems to be relishing the opportunity to get away from just being the Anxious Man. “I’m also a person filled with joy. I have an endless number of positive interactions and family and experiences and things that make me, you know, happy,” he says. “I think the Guggenheim show will kind of amplify that, like, this sh-t to me is sometimes very funny.”

Johnson has the kind of success people dream of. He’s wealthy beyond his wildest imagination. He has enough influence that he can—and does—shine

a light on other artists. He and his L.A. art dealer David Kordansky have resurrected the careers of several overlooked Black artists, including Sam Gilliam before he died. But asked when he knew that he was going to make it as an artist, Johnson can't quite get there. "I've always been a person who aspired to the freedom of the idea that I would at some point have the resources and enthusiasm of an audience that would allow me to do this in perpetuity. That's absolutely something I aspire to," he says. "I think I'm getting closer."

## **Correction, March 31**

The original version of this story misstated the opening date of Johnson's show at the Guggenheim. It is April 18, not April 16.

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# Meet David Corenswet, the New Superman

Dockterman is a correspondent at TIME. She covers culture, society, and gender, including topics from blockbuster movies to the #MeToo movement to how the pandemic pushed moms out of the workplace.



The new Superman, David Corenswet, resides not in Metropolis but a suburb of Philadelphia. He's close enough to the downtown train station that his commute to Manhattan, he claims, feels shorter than when he lived in Brooklyn as a struggling actor. We meet at the kind of diner with syrup and hot sauce on every table, on a quaint main street that ends, inevitably, at a Wawa convenience store.

It's an unusual home base for an actor on the precipice of a major breakthrough. Corenswet, 31, will play the lead in *Superman*, which hits theaters on July 11, the latest film to take on the [most popular superhero](#) of all time. He moved to Pennsylvania to be near family, and he's now raising a 1-year-old daughter there with his actor wife. Since movies now tend to shoot in Toronto or Atlanta or London or anywhere else besides New York or L.A., he doesn't feel the pull of those cities. Actors, he says, can "get away with being anywhere as long as you have a nice self-tape setup for auditions."

He's easy to spot as he walks in. Corenswet looks like, well, *Superman*. He stands at an imposing height, and a curling lock of hair falls in the middle of his forehead. Clad in a blue sweater and leather jacket with sunglasses tucked neatly into the collar, he asks the hostess if we can sit by the window, the first time in my years of interviewing celebrities that an actor hasn't requested a dark corner.



He's refreshingly neurotic, picking at his nails as he admits that, as a student at Juilliard, he sparred with professors. "Some teachers would say that I was difficult because I love a good argument," he says, promising it wasn't born from stubbornness. "I'm happy to be wrong. I just want to be convinced." Despite being told he was "too intellectual" and "too analytical" for Hollywood, he was swept into the Ryan Murphy universe, starring in the 2019 series *The Politician* and in 2020's *Hollywood* before leveling up to feature films: he played the bad guy in *Twisters* last year. Before the shoot for that movie wrapped, director James Gunn called Corenswet to tell him he'd won the role as the Man of Steel.

Entering the superhero industrial complex isn't necessarily the career boon it used to be. The genre is struggling, and Warner Bros. for its part has placed its hopes on Gunn's *Superman* reboot. There's a chance that [this character](#) will never let go of Corenswet. Actors like [Chris Evans](#) and [Hugh Jackman](#) are still fighting to peel off the spandex of the superheroes that made them famous. Corenswet knows Superman will lead his IMDb page, his Wikipedia entry, his obituary. "Would this be worth doing if this was the only thing I do as an actor for the rest of my life?" he asks as he adds milk to his coffee. "I think the answer is yes."

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The knock on Superman is that he can be boring. He was raised by loving adoptive parents, has a smart and beautiful girlfriend, and can beat (almost) anyone in a fight. "Compared to Batman and Spider-Man, he isn't depicted as having great inner turmoil. If he's invincible, what's at stake?" Corenswet answers his own question, citing famed Superman writer Grant Morrison: "All the important stuff. You can be the most well-adjusted, well-intentioned person, but people will still die. You can't save everyone forever."



A few years ago, Warner Bros. brought in Gunn and Peter Safran as co-chairs and co-CEOs of the newly formed [DC Studios](#) to launch a series of films, beginning with *Superman*. Gunn is best known for writing and directing Marvel's three strange yet successful [\*Guardians of the Galaxy\*](#) movies. He arrived at DC aiming to largely shed the ethos of the somber [Christopher Nolan](#) and [Zack Snyder films](#), and pitched the flagship property in particular as lighter and brighter. The success of this approach will determine the future of DC films.

Gunn offered Corenswet the role on one condition. He noted his experiences with [Chris Pratt](#) and John Cena, saying, “They treated everyone with kindness and respect.” It was non-negotiable that Corenswet do the same. “I’ve seen sets that cater to an actor or director’s ego and that’s just not something that would happen with David,” Gunn says in an email. “He is Superman, even in his nerdiness. He listens to old jazz standards. Like that’s what he listens to, just as normal procedure. Like Superman, he’s a simple man in complicated times.”

Corenswet does not share the goofiness for which Pratt became famous on [\*Parks and Recreation\*](#) or [John Cena’s affinity for outlandish gags](#). He exudes a self-seriousness appropriate to the Boy Scout superhero. I ask if his penchant for questions extends to directors on ultra-expensive productions

that involve choreographing flying actors, a CGI kaiju monster, and filming in the Arctic Circle. “I thought for sure the biggest moviemaking machine is where those conversations are not going to be had,” he says. “And it turned out it was the inverse.”

That was due to Gunn’s patience. “David’s a pain in the ass because he asks a ton of questions about every single little moment,” says the director. “But I honestly think my favorite moments were when I would get irritated by his endless questions and indulge him anyway, and then I’d see him turn those questions into something magical in his performance.”

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Corenswet still has calluses from all his time in a harness. He estimates that he spent at least half of his shooting days in midair fight or flight. Who was he battling up there? Who knows. Corenswet and I are in the unusual position of discussing a film neither of us has seen. Gunn is still editing. When I joke that Superman’s billionaire nemesis Lex Luthor, played by [Nicholas Hoult](#), obviously isn’t airborne, Corenswet widens his eyes and shrugs.

Gunn sheds a little light on the superhero-slash-journalist’s state of mind. “He is starting to become successful (at both jobs) in the big glitzy city so far away from home,” he says. “He’s madly in love with a woman who isn’t so sure about him. And he’s made a few superhuman friends who like him but think of him as naive. All these new elements in his life have unbalanced him a bit and as he’s tottering we’re going to see where he lands in terms of his values and choices.”



As for that woman: Gunn says the chemistry between Corenswet and Lois Lane actor [Rachel Brosnahan](#) was palpable from day one. Or, more specifically, days one and two: “We shot the 12-minute interview scene with Lois and Clark. That was 10 percent of the movie in two days. And to see the energy and magic between him and Rachel was awesome, not to mention how incredibly prepared they both were. It was a huge relief.”

And Corenswet does tell me about Krypto, Superman’s fluffy, caped dog whose trailer debut marked the arrival of a warmer, fuzzier DC. A dog named Jolene stood in for the superpet. She always trotted onto set to the tune of [Dolly Parton’s iconic song](#). The final version will be largely CGI—the trailer features Krypto dragging Superman across a frozen tundra, a feat that even Jolene couldn’t pull off. When I press for further plot details Corenswet is genuinely apologetic: he has no idea what will appear in the final cut.

Nor does he seem to feel particularly anxious about it. While Gunn [told journalists who visited set](#) that the pressure was making him “miserable,” Corenswet didn’t sweat it. “What’s the pressure? Pressure to be good? I definitely want to be good,” he says. “But I’m not directing the movie. I give James puzzle pieces, and he gets to pick which one goes in which place. I can’t take on the responsibility that James took on of delivering a Superman film to the masses. But James is the right person to do it.”



Corenswet is remarkably sanguine about a film that has been the subject of immense scrutiny. The trailer is the most watched in the history of either DC or Warner Bros. Though he may not want the burden of Superman's success or failure on his, yes, broad shoulders, it will land there anyway.

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The actor does seem to have some sense that his life is about to explode, though the homebody has no plans to leave the Philly suburbs. "Luckily I don't like going out much," he says. He has taken aside co-stars like Hoult, who starred in franchises like *X-Men* and *Mad Max*, to ask what his life is like. "He's very unassuming. I feel very fondly towards him," Corenswet says. "But he doesn't have anything particularly figured out. When I hear from someone who says they have it figured out, I think, you're sure now, but I wonder in two years if you'll feel you did the right thing."

Corenswet [said in interviews](#), years ago, that Superman was his dream role. Even if he's not a career planner, he has manifested this opportunity for millions of people to see his work. "There is an amazing, solemn responsibility to be the person to play this character. And there's no guarantee that I would have had a more interesting career if I hadn't," he

says. "I know a lot of fantastic actors, better than I am, who may never be seen by more than an audience of 50 or 100 people at a regional theater."

And no matter how long he tries to remain incognito, he cannot escape that he looks like Clark Kent: "A few people who are famous have told me, 'I deal with this, but nothing like what you're going to.' And I don't know whether that's true, but Superman is a uniquely recognizable character."



In 2023, Corens wet's friend and *Twisters* co-star [Glen Powell](#) crashed at his home while attending the lacrosse national championships. As they strolled through the stadium together, fans yelled out "Hangman," Powell's nickname from [Top Gun: Maverick](#). Corens wet remained blissfully anonymous, but can imagine something similar in his future. "With a name like David Corens wet, it could be years before people would be able to shout that out in the street." He offers a knowing grin. "But 'Superman!' gives you a shortcut."

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# Dying for Sex Is an Audaciously Raunchy Celebration of Life in the Face of Certain Death

Berman is the TV critic at TIME. Along with reviewing current television, she writes about the ways in which entertainment and pop culture intersect with our larger social and political realities. Her TIME essay on [Ted Lasso and modern masculinity](#) won a New York Press Club award in 2022.



The first thing Molly, the protagonist of the new [FX](#) dramedy *Dying for Sex*, does after learning she has incurable cancer is run to the bodega for a green plastic two-liter of generic diet soda. Then she lights up a menthol cigarette. Across the street, her husband Steve, who nursed Molly through her first fight with breast cancer a few years earlier, sits bewildered in the office of

their couples therapist. When Molly's oncologist called with the awful news, they had been arguing about her longing for sex and his refusal to touch her.

Molly, played with impish vivacity and quiet resolve by [Michelle Williams](#), bears little resemblance to the Hollywood archetype of the beautiful young woman [dying of cancer](#). Neither a doomed dream girl like Ali MacGraw in *Love Story* nor a driven genius struck down in her prime like [Florence Pugh](#) in the latest *Love Story* riff, [We Live in Time](#), she's no vehicle for some devoted man's epiphanies about what really matters. Despite her terminal diagnosis, Molly's story rarely plays like a tragedy. It is, instead, a brutally frank, disarmingly raunchy, often uproariously funny rejoinder to the perfect-patient narrative—an affirmation of life through the insistence that there's no wrong way to face the certain death that ultimately awaits us all.

**Read more:** [The Best New TV Shows of February 2025](#)

The title *Dying for Sex* evokes trashy reality series like *Sex Sent Me to the ER*, but the show takes its name from the [acclaimed podcast](#) that the real Molly Kochan recorded with her best friend, Nikki Boyer (an executive producer of the adaptation), about Kochan's radical response to her Stage IV diagnosis. Rather than resign herself to a chaste marriage with a husband who treated her as a patient more than a lover, she left him and embarked upon a sexual odyssey. By the time she died, in 2019, she had explored her desires with more partners than most people would rack up in 10 lifetimes.



In the brilliantly cast show, Molly briefly tries to make it work with Steve (a concerned yet condescending Jay Duplass). But when he bursts into tears as she goes down on him, she realizes that living the rest of her life on her own terms will mean parting ways with him. So she moves out and recruits Nikki (a radiantly flustered [Jenny Slate](#)), a theater actress who's finally settling down with a sweet single dad (Kelvin Yu), to be her caretaker. “I wanna die with you,” Molly tells Nikki. The request will upset Nikki’s life, and she knows it, but she loves Molly too much to consider saying no.

Convinced she’s squandered her 40ish years on earth, Molly must decide what to do with her newfound freedom. A breakthrough comes in an appointment with Sonya (Esco Jouléy), a cool, young palliative-care social worker. “Everybody has a bucket list,” Sonya insists. “I’ve never even had an orgasm with another person,” Molly blurts out. “And now I’m gonna die.” So begins said bucket list.

With Nikki and Sonya as her wingwomen and support system, Molly throws herself into hookups. She discovers an appetite for dominance, and her

fumblings lead to a moving encounter with an experienced top. She isn't looking for romantic love but accidentally finds it with the man in the apartment across the hall. A slovenly dreamboat known only as Neighbor Guy (a gloriously game [Rob Delaney](#)), he takes prurient pleasure when Molly scolds him for eating in the elevator.



*Dying for Sex* co-creators Kim Rosenstock ([Only Murders in the Building](#), *GLOW*) and Elizabeth Meriwether ([The Dropout](#)), who worked together on *New Girl*, have a track record of blending tones and outsize characters in a way that reads as honest about life's absurdities, rather than contrived. This series is their deftest tightrope walk yet. Scenes where Molly struggles to reconcile with a mom, Gail (Sissy Spacek), whose former boyfriend abused Molly when she was a child comfortably coexist with a raunchy scene where Molly's—enthusiastically consensual—attempt to kick Neighbor Guy in the crotch lands her in the hospital. Viewers who never thought to wonder about the toxicity of post-chemo urine will be graphically enlightened.

It would probably be impossible to puncture pieties around cancer, sex, and death without a few missteps. In a concession to Hollywood norms, the show makes its dying woman unfeasibly gorgeous all the way to hospice. Molly's relationship with the health care system is a bit fantastical. Money isn't an issue. Sonya doesn't hesitate to take her patient to a sex party. A doctor's (David Rasche) brusqueness is a chance for Molly to flex her domme muscles more than a sign of overwork.

But it would be misguided to begrudge the show its creative license, and specifically its refusal to fixate on the bureaucratic nightmare that is being gravely ill in America, when so many of its enormous swings connect. Mirroring Molly's openness, Rosenstock, Meriwether, and Williams explode clichéd depictions of common human experiences that are perennially misrepresented in pop culture, from BDSM to the process of "active dying." The dialogue is equally sharp in funny moments (Molly longs to be "one of those fully realized women who have sex while wearing jewelry") and painful ones (Gail: "I'm the one who let him ruin you." Molly: "I'm not ruined!"). Nikki's perspective is a crucial foil to Molly's; we sense the effort she has to put into being the kind of person a terminally ill friend can rely on. In giving the love between these two singular women the same emotional weight as any ill-fated romance, *Dying for Sex* becomes the rare cancer story that celebrates life in all its perverse idiosyncracies without shrinking from the specter of death.

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# Pulse Just Doesn't Know What to Do With Its #MeToo Storyline

Levitt is a contributor for TIME.



Netflix is finally getting into the world of medical procedurals with *Pulse*, a Miami-set [hospital drama](#) from creator Zoe Robyn (*The Equalizer*). Like most medical shows, it's full of intriguing cases, a host of complicated practitioners, and plenty of drama. The series opens with a school bus careening off a bridge and plunging into the water below and only gets wilder from there. While all of that is fairly typical of a hospital show, there is one element of *Pulse* that hits different, and doesn't always land well: its inclusion of a [#MeToo](#) storyline that manages to be incisive, as a damning statement on how institutions fail those who come forward, and simultaneously a woefully underdeveloped exercise in schlock. Let's try and figure it out.

In the first episode of *Pulse*, all anyone can talk about is the scandal of Dr. Xander Phillips' (Colin Woodell) suspension and the temporary promotion of Dr. Danny Simms (Willa Fitzgerald) to Chief Resident Phillips' old job. It's a hell of a first day in this new role for Simms—the school bus incident brings an influx of patients in urgent need, and a hurricane is on the way. Because they're short-staffed and Phillips just finished a shift, he's asked to stay on for the next shift, even though he's suspended. Here's the rub: it was Simms who reported Phillips for what's implied to be [sexual harassment](#), and everyone at the hospital knows it.

Phillips is far from a seedy creep who draws the ire of everyone around him. In fact, the show presents him as quite the opposite. "The guy's a saint," surgical resident Tom Cole (Jack Bannon) says of Phillips, and that's a sentiment shared by most of the staff at Maguire Medical Center. He's warm, helpful, a strong leader, and an excellent doctor.

**Read more:** [\*Netflix's First Big Medical Procedural, Pulse, Is DOA\*](#)



Throughout *Pulse*, flashbacks shed light on Simms and Phillips' relationship before the complaint was filed. Given that Phillips is Simms' superior, there's a clear power dynamic at play. We see how Phillips is flirtatious with Simms, trying to kiss her in the hospital, which she swiftly rejects. But a first-episode cliffhanger reveals that the reason Simms rejected his advances

was not because she didn't want him, but because it happened at work—the pair are actually in a relationship, and even living together now. To turn this reveal into a twisty shock throws everything we've seen about Simms into question: If she's lying about her relationship with Phillips, her entire character is called into question.

Over the season's 10 episodes, it becomes increasingly clear that she's not lying: Phillips used his power to pressure her into a relationship. Even though she eventually fell for him, he coerced her into something she didn't want. While falling in love with him makes things appear like they may be improved now, it doesn't excuse the way he abused his power at the outset. We see that he purposefully pushed against having their relationship reported to HR so he could ultimately protect himself professionally and secure what he wanted personally without consideration for her career or how she'd be perceived. The problem with this is that slyly revealing that they're sleeping together consensually frames Simms as a villain who's out to take down a more powerful man, which is deeply dishonest. And even if she were lying, telling a story about sexual misconduct for pure shock value is distasteful at best.

The storyline's most effective moments come when Simms is roaming through the hallways of the hospital, only to hear people talking about her, calling her manipulative, a liar, someone willing to throw good people under the bus for her own gain. Simms never interrupts these conversations with the kind of quippy retort you'd typically hear on television. Instead, she just keeps going. If there's one thing that's abundantly clear about Simms, it's that she's extremely dedicated to her work. It's everything to her. And she won't waste a second admonishing people for gossiping when there's work to do and lives to be saved. Simms has to absorb the vitriol and move on.

**Read more:** [\*This Is Going to Hurt Is the Best Medical Drama in Years\*](#)



There are a few people in Simms' corner. In an Episode 7 flashback, Cass (Jessica Rothe), a senior ER nurse, finds the pair kissing, and Simms begs her not to tell anyone. Simms expresses her fears that she may be perceived as someone using a relationship to get ahead at work. But Cass sees things as they are: "Maybe I think he's using chief to get you," she responds, referring to Phillips' position of power. The show understands that all women aren't a monolith.

At the end of the same episode, Chair of Surgery and Emergency Medicine Natalie Cruz (Justina Machado), who's been supportive of Simms, warns her that what she's up against will be difficult to overcome. Referring to her upcoming HR meeting, Cruz says, "I know you want it to make everything better. And I hope it does for you. But it's complicated. And you need to know that this could also make everything a whole lot worse." It's not exactly the kind of pep talk you want to hear from a superior, and especially the person who's had your back.

But *Pulse*'s problem is that these words ring hollow. The entire harassment subplot is underdeveloped, taking a back seat to typical medical drama. When this pivotal moment arrives for Simms, there's little for audiences to grasp onto. The dialogue is overly general to the point that we don't really understand the complications Cruz is referring to. Is Simms' job at risk? Or her reputation? Her chances of victory? There's an earlier scene in the same episode where Phillips' wealthy and influential mother comes to Cruz about the complaint, but even she doesn't lay out what she wants. Everything's only implied or suggested, as if the show is unwilling to make a direct statement regarding Simms and Phillips' relationship. It sure seems like Phillips' mother is suggesting Simms be fired, but we never come to understand just how powerful their family is, or how exactly they can manipulate things. The next day, Simms goes to HR ahead of the meeting and drops her complaint.



One of Simms' justifications for her complaint against Phillips is rumors of previous sexual impropriety at his old hospital, and that those problems led him to transfer hospitals. It's regularly teased through the season that the truth will be revealed. That mystery is solved in the final episode, wherein it's revealed that Phillips had no claims of sexual misconduct against him. Instead, he signed an NDA because a mistake he made resulted in the death of a patient. Once again, this reads as a sensitive subject being used as a cheap plot device rather than giving it proper attention.

Perhaps the most damning aspect of the plotline is the way it handles the outcomes for each character. Its ultimate message—that even if you do the right thing and come forward, there's nothing close to a guarantee that that choice will have a positive impact—is unfortunately often true to life. But *Pulse* is so unwilling to take sides, keen to instead observe that people are complex and capable of flaws. This upends the power imbalance the show is trying to critique. It purports that Simms and Phillips are equally flawed when Phillips is clearly, to this viewer at least, in the wrong.

The end of Season 1 is surprisingly upbeat, despite Phillips getting what he wants, while Simms faces a major setback in what matters most to her. Yet it's played off as some sort of victory for Simms, as she floats in the ocean, happy and free. Free from the relationship that brought her so much unpleasantness—and yes, so much love—for the last year. But her career, her number one focus, has taken a hit, and it's all because she tried to advocate for herself in a system designed to maintain the status quo at all costs, even the human ones.

The first season of *Pulse* is interested in the ways lies can spread and how rumors percolate throughout a work environment. Once they are thrown into the world, they linger and fester in ways impossible to predict. It's not inherently problematic to be invested in the gray areas of workplace relationships; not everything in life is black and white, and the show is true to that. But *Pulse* is so stuck in the gray that it's unwilling to make definitive statements about its characters' behavior. *Pulse* spends so much time in the gray that it ends up entirely lacking in color.

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