

MAY 26, 2025

TIME

Dealing with it.

By Eric Cortellessa



TIME Magazine

[May 26th, 2025]

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Exclusive: Inside Trump's First 100 Days

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[President Donald Trump](#) emerges through a pair of handsome wooden doors on the third floor of the White House. On his way down the wide, carpeted staircase, he passes portraits of his predecessors. [Nixon](#) is opposite the landing outside the residence. Two flights down, he has swapped the placement of [Clinton](#) and [Lincoln](#), moving a massive painting of the latter

into the main entrance hall of the mansion. “Lincoln is Lincoln, in all fairness,” he explains. “And I gave Clinton a good space.” But it’s the portrait around the corner that Trump wants to show off.

It’s a giant painting of a photograph—that photograph, the [famous image of Trump](#), his fist raised, blood trickling down his face, after the [attempt on his life](#) last July at a rally in Butler, Pa. It hangs across the foyer from a portrait of Obama, in tacit competition. When they bring tours in, everyone wants to look at this one, Trump says, gesturing to the painting of himself, in technicolor defiance. “100 to 1, they prefer that,” he says. “It’s incredible.”

Making his way out to the Rose Garden, he walks up the inclined colonnade toward the Oval Office, describing the other alterations to the decor, both inside and out. His imprint on his workspace is apparent. The molding and mantels have gold accents now, and he has filled the walls with portraits of other presidents in gilded frames. He has hung an early copy of the Declaration of Independence behind a set of blue curtains. The [box with a red button](#) that allows Trump to summon Diet Cokes is back in its place on the Resolute desk, behind which stands a new battalion of flags, including one for the [U.S. Space Force](#), the military branch he established. A map of the “[Gulf of America](#),” as Trump has rechristened the Gulf of Mexico, was propped on a stand nearby.

If Trump is making cosmetic changes to the White House, his effect on the presidency goes much deeper. The first 100 days of his second term have been among the most destabilizing in American history, a blitz of power grabs, strategic shifts, and direct attacks that have left opponents, global counterparts, and even many supporters stunned. Trump has launched a battery of orders and memoranda that have hobbled entire government agencies and departments. He has threatened to take Greenland by force, seize control of the Panama Canal, and annex Canada. Weaponizing his control of the Justice Department, he has ordered investigations of political enemies. He has [gutted much of the civil service](#), removing more than a hundred thousand federal workers. He has gone to war with institutions across American life: [universities](#), media outlets, law firms, museums. He [pardoned or gave a commutation to every single defendant](#) charged in connection with the Jan. 6 attacks, including those convicted of violent acts and seditious conspiracy. Seeking to remake the global economy, he

triggered a trade war by unleashing a sweeping array of tariffs that sent markets plummeting. Embarking on his promised program of mass deportation, he has mobilized agencies across government, from the IRS to the Postal Service, as part of the effort to find, detain, and expel immigrants. He has shipped some of them to foreign countries without due process, citing a wartime provision from the 18th century. His Administration has snatched foreign students off the streets and stripped their visas for engaging in speech he dislikes. He has threatened to send Americans to a notorious prison in El Salvador. Says one senior Administration official: “Our success depends on his ability to shock you.”

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What shocks constitutional scholars and civil libertarians is the power Trump is attempting to amass and the impunity with which he is wielding it. Trump has claimed Congress's constitutional authority over spending and foreign trade, citing a loosely defined emergency. He has asserted control over independent agencies and ignored post-Watergate rules designed to prevent political meddling in law enforcement and investigations. When lower courts have ordered him to slow or reverse potentially illegal moves, he has at times ignored or publicly ridiculed them. In one case, he defied a Supreme Court order. Issuing a ruling in that fight, Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson, a Reagan appointee and arguably the most influential conservative jurist outside the high court, [said](#) the Administration's behavior threatens to "reduce the rule of law to lawlessness and tarnish the very values for which Americans of diverse views and persuasions have always stood."

In an hour-long interview with TIME on April 22, Trump cast the first three months of his term as an unbridled success. "What I'm doing is exactly what I've campaigned on," he says. Which is true, in part. From [deportations](#) and [tariffs](#) to remaking America's alliances and attacking [diversity, equity, and inclusion policies](#), Donald John Trump, the 45th and 47th President of the United States, is carrying out pledges to radically reshape America and its role in the world. He didn't invent most of the problems he is aggressively going after, and supporters say he is doing more than predecessors from both parties to fix them. America's immigration system has been broken for decades; Trump's moves have slowed illegal border crossings to a trickle. Throughout the Cold War, U.S. strategists bemoaned military "free-riders" in Europe and East Asia; Trump has triggered previously unimaginable moves by Germany and Japan to spend more on their own, and their neighbors', collective defense. China used its accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 to launch a multidecade attack on those who sought to do business with them; Trump's latest tariffs are the most aggressive effort to fight back. "I have solved more problems in the world without asking for or getting credit," he says.

[video id=FlgFv0Ze autostart="viewable"]

Trump has benefited from an [enfeebled Democratic Party](#) and compliant congressional Republicans who have abdicated legislative powers and long-held beliefs, whether out of cowardice or a desire to ride his coattails. There has been little meaningful or sustained backlash from the public. The civil-society leaders and corporate titans with the most political capital have largely acquiesced to Trump's rule, choosing supplicancy over solidarity. The capitulation has only emboldened him.

It's possible that Trump, 100 days in, is at the peak of his power. A resistance—if not one that resembles the first-term Resistance—is stirring to life. Trump's protectionist policies threaten a recession of his own making; businesses big and small face the imminent threat of closure as they cut workers, close production lines, and try to stay afloat in the face of disruptions to supply chains and revenue of a scale not seen since the pandemic. [Universities](#) have found greater courage in the face of Trump's threats to their multibillion-dollar research budgets. Communities that rely on immigrant labor have bristled at the uptick in [deportations](#). With consumer confidence at its lowest level in three years and inflation expected to climb as a consequence of the [trade war](#), even meek Republicans have raised complaints about the impact of some of Trump's moves on their political future. Polling finds that a larger share of Americans now [live](#) in fear of their government and Trump's approval rating has slipped to 40%, according to a Pew survey, lower at this early stage in his term than that of any other recent President.

The self-declared mission of Trump and his top aides in his first 100 days has been to overwhelm opposition everywhere through this barrage of moves on all fronts. "He has ceded absolutely nothing to the bureaucracy—zero," says White House chief of staff Susie Wiles. "Everything he wants to do or thinks is important for the country, we have figured out a way." Even the most experienced government hands are struggling to keep track of every norm-breaking change in Washington, let alone where it will leave the country and the world. Trump's top aides say he is only getting started. "He had four years to think about what he wanted to do," says Wiles, "and now he wants it executed on."

Trump's early clemency for the rioters who had attacked the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, set the tone for his relationship with Congress. His aides had been wrestling with which defendants should be pardoned or have their sentences commuted. Some worried that freeing all of them, including criminals convicted of violence or seditious conspiracy, would backfire. But on his first day in office, upon arriving at the White House from his inaugural ceremony, Trump settled the debate. "I don't want to talk about this anymore," he said, according to two senior officials who were present. "Just do them all."

Under Trump, Republican majorities in Congress have ceded power to a Chief Executive many are too timid to confront. Aided by [Musk's Department of Government Efficiency](#) (DOGE), Trump gutted congressionally authorized government departments, from the U.S. Agency for International Development to the U.S. Agency for Global Media. He ordered the dismantling of the [Department of Education](#), setting up a legal fight over an agency established through Congress in the 1970s. Trump withheld federal dollars from programs targeted in his Executive Orders, triggering lawsuits. In March, as Trump was preparing to roll out his tariffs, House Republican leadership slipped language into a stopgap funding bill to prevent any member of Congress from challenging the national emergency Trump has declared to implement them. "The President of the United States has the right, and arguably, I think, the responsibility, to deal with other nations who are engaging in unfair trade practices," Speaker Mike Johnson tells TIME in an interview.



Trump's blunt-force approach to his nominally co-equal partners in the Legislative Branch was on display in a meeting with House Republicans in April. Settling into the Cabinet room, members of the ultraconservative House Freedom Caucus were prepared to buck a budget framework the Senate GOP had devised, blocking progress on a key agenda item. Trump was having none of it. The President walked in, flanked by top aides and Johnson, and proceeded to lecture the holdouts for nearly 45 minutes, according to two people in the meeting. "This is what I want," Trump said. Representative Chip Roy interjected. "Mr. President, I hear you," the Texas Congressman said. "But at the end of the day, I don't trust this process. The Senate has screwed us over before." Trump cut him off. "Don't be a ball buster, OK?" The next morning, Roy voted to advance the measure, along with all but two other House Republicans. Roy's office declined to comment.

The message from the President went out across his party: Don't cross me. Even after [he lost in 2020](#), Trump's stalwart allies won primaries thanks to his backing, solidifying his hold on the GOP and turning it once and for all

into an instrument of his agenda. Now much of the party are true believers in the MAGA creed and most of the rest have accepted that going along with the program is a career requirement. “They understand that President Trump is the most powerful force in politics in the modern era,” Speaker Johnson explains. “Everybody wants to be on this train—and not in front of it.”

Now Trump is trying to do the same thing with the federal government. Enter Musk’s DOGE. Claiming to root out waste, fraud, and abuse, Musk’s team has taken control of independent federal agencies and inflicted crippling cuts. About 75,000 federal employees accepted Musk’s offer of deferred buyouts. DOGE has all but demolished agencies like USAID, and is trying to do the same to others, like the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Sometimes it has been messy. When DOGE agents tried to take over the U.S. Institute of Peace, a nonprofit created by Congress, the organization refused to let them in. The DOGE team came back with the FBI and D.C. police.

DOGE has also consolidated data from across government on individual Americans—pulling together for the first time in one place everything from Social Security numbers to student loan data to annual income. Those files have then been used to advance the White House’s objectives. The IRS struck an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security to provide taxpayer data to help identify targets for deportation. A spokesperson for DOGE did not respond to requests for comment. Wiles says the operation has been the sharpest weapon in Trump’s fight to grab control of government powers. “Had we not done that, even with the discomfort it caused,” she adds, “then we would leave here in four years having cut the federal bureaucracy by 0.18%.”

Louis DeJoy was among the federal officials who learned a hard lesson about power in the new Trump era. The former CEO of a logistics company and a Trump megadonor, DeJoy was tapped to become Postmaster General in 2020. Hired to retool an agency on the brink of insolvency, he cut billions of dollars in contracts and embarked on a 10-year plan to centralize the U.S. Postal Service’s delivery network. But in March, he became embroiled in a struggle between Musk, who wants to privatize the Postal Service, and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, who was maneuvering to fold it into

his department. Meanwhile, officials from U.S. Customs and Border Protection had asked the USPS to supply data to help its project of tracking migrants, according to multiple sources familiar with the matter.

On March 10, Musk dispatched two young former Tesla staffers to the USPS to embed inside the agency, nominally to cut costs. When DeJoy refused to give the DOGE officials access to sensitive USPS servers that contain the mailing addresses of every American, the aides complained to Musk, who then complained to Trump, the sources tell TIME. Sergio Gor, Trump's director of personnel, called DeJoy and USPS board members, saying the President wanted him out, according to two sources familiar with the matter, and suggesting to DeJoy that Trump and Musk could make life uncomfortable for him. When it became clear the problem could only escalate, DeJoy, who had already announced plans to retire, resigned to take the target off the agency's back. Gor did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

With Congress and the Executive Branch now largely compliant, it has fallen to the courts to determine the outer limits of Trump's power. More than 100 cases have already been brought challenging him. And an administrative error by the Trump team in its aggressive program to deport undocumented migrants has turned into an incipient constitutional crisis.

In July 2024, El Salvador President Nayib Bukele had invited then Florida Representative Matt Gaetz and other lawmakers on a diplomatic visit. During a dinner at his lakefront compound, Bukele made an offer: he was willing to imprison migrants Trump wanted to deport in El Salvador's famously harsh prison, the Terrorism Confinement Center, known as CECOT. The next day, Bukele gave the U.S. delegation a tour of the facility, the largest prison in Latin America. "The conditions had zapped the inhabitants of any will to fight," Gaetz recalls. "It's tough to see the state of the human condition drained of hope."

Gaetz pitched the plan to deputy chief of staff Stephen Miller, who pitched the plan to Trump, a senior administration source tells TIME. Trump instructed Secretary of State Marco Rubio to travel to El Salvador to strike an arrangement with Bukele, the source says. A deal was quietly sealed in

February. “One of the reasons I like it is because it would be much less expensive than our prison system, and I think it would actually be a greater deterrent,” Trump says.



Days later, Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act, a rarely used wartime law from the 18th century, to [deport](#) 238 alleged Venezuelan gang members to CECOT without giving them the chance to claim they had been detained in error or to profess their innocence in immigration court. U.S. District Court Judge James Boasberg ordered the Trump Administration to turn the planes around. The Administration ignored the order, Boasberg said, and the President lashed out, calling for the judge’s impeachment. In response, [Chief Justice John Roberts](#) issued a rare public rebuke of Trump.

The conflict only grew when the Administration admitted that it had “mistakenly” flown a Maryland sheet-metal apprentice, [Kilmar Abrego Garcia](#), to El Salvador as part of the deportations. “When I first heard of the situation, I was not happy,” Trump says. “Then I found out that he was a person who was an MS-13 member.” The man’s lawyers dispute that and

other allegations. The Supreme Court ordered the Administration to “facilitate” Abrego Garcia’s release from CECOT, but it has refused to bring him back.

Asked if he had requested Bukele to turn Abrego Garcia over, Trump said he hadn’t. “I haven’t been asked to ask him by my attorneys,” he says. “Nobody asked me to ask him that question, except you.” As for the political outcry over his refusal to return a man mistakenly sent to a foreign prison without due process, Trump says he believes it will accrue to his advantage: “I think this is another men in women’s sports thing for the Democrats.”

Soon it wasn’t just immigrants who allegedly came to the U.S. illegally who were targeted. On March 25, [Rumeysa Ozturk](#), a Ph.D. student at Tufts University, left her apartment to go to an Iftar dinner with friends. On the sidewalk, she was abducted by six plainclothes ICE officials and taken to a facility in central Louisiana. An immigration judge has denied her bond, while the government has yet to produce evidence of her alleged activities in support of Hamas or charge her with a crime. A DHS official has cited an op-ed she co-wrote with four other students last spring criticizing Israel’s military campaign in Gaza as a reason for her arrest. Trump says he is “not aware” of her case, but would consider asking the Justice Department to release any evidence they have against Ozturk. “I would have no trouble with it,” he says.

Trump always claimed without evidence that his four criminal indictments were the result of opponents’ using law enforcement for political ends. As President, he has openly wielded his control over the Justice Department’s prosecutors and the FBI’s investigators to target his perceived enemies. On April 9, he issued a [memorandum](#) directing the Justice Department to investigate Christopher Krebs, the former top cybersecurity official in Trump’s first term, who said there was no evidence of widespread fraud in the 2020 election. [Another](#) directive ordered the DOJ to scrutinize former Trump Homeland Security official Miles Taylor, who authored an [anonymous New York Times op-ed](#) in 2018 that was harshly critical of the President.

Trump has also weakened internal checks on his power. In January, he fired the Inspectors General of 17 different agencies, gutting a watchdog system

implemented after Watergate to guard against mismanagement and abuses of power. He replaced experienced prosecutors with loyalists. For his new U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, Trump picked Alina Habba, his former personal lawyer. In Washington, the nation's largest and most important U.S. Attorney's office, Trump tapped Ed Martin, a 2020 "Stop the Steal" organizer who had never been a prosecutor and who demoted the lawyers who brought cases against Jan. 6 rioters.

In his interview with TIME, Trump says he will always comply with the courts. But even legal scholars with an expansive view of executive authority have grown alarmed. The Administration has refused to spend money that Congress and the courts had told them to. Trump [signed](#) Executive Orders to remove individuals suspected of ties to foreign terrorist organizations.

Jack Goldsmith, a conservative Harvard Law professor who served in the George W. Bush Administration, [argues](#) that Trump's "tsunami of legally questionable Executive Orders" and proclamations [are](#) part of a "scheme to rethink constitutional constraints" that [has](#) led to a "dangerous power struggle between the Trump administration and the federal judiciary."

"Well," Trump said, scanning a news story on his phone in the cabin of his private plane. "Look at that." It was Dec. 14, and the President-elect was returning from the Army-Navy football game in Annapolis, Md., when he read that ABC had agreed to pay \$15 million toward his presidential library to [settle a defamation lawsuit](#) against anchor George Stephanopoulos. Aides burst into a round of applause. The settlement was part of a broader strategy. Trump believed that if ABC would cave, so too would other companies worried about getting on his bad side, according to three sources familiar with his thinking.

Trump tasked his incoming White House counsel David Warrington, staff secretary Will Scharf, and top policy adviser Stephen Miller to craft Executive Orders targeting other perceived corporate enemies. "That was the first break in the dam," explains a source close to Trump. The message, the source says, would be: "Look, either we come after you, we shut you down, or you're going to help me out."

The Administration soon shot off letters to top law firms that represented Trump foes and universities known for progressive social activism, especially anti-Israel protests. Paul Weiss, Kirkland & Ellis, Skadden Arps, and other white-shoe firms quickly agreed to provide hundreds of millions in pro-bono work for Trump in exchange for relief from his attacks. “I’ve gotta be doing something right, because I’ve had a lot of law firms give me a lot of money,” the President tells TIME.

Universities followed. Columbia University agreed to overhaul its protest policies and change its Middle Eastern Studies curriculum to avoid Trump’s cutting \$400 million of federal funding. CBS’s leadership is reportedly considering a settlement after Trump filed a \$20 billion lawsuit against *60 Minutes*. Trump has taken over the Kennedy Center for the Arts and ordered the Smithsonian to change its exhibits.

Trump is weakening the structures necessary for organized opposition, critics say. The more fragmented the country, the less its people can mount meaningful resistance; and the less citizens can make leaders responsive to their will, the less they become agents of their collective fate, they say. “At some point we have to understand the game,” Connecticut Democratic Senator Chris Murphy says. “His attempt to bully states, municipalities, not-for-profit universities, journalists, law firms, and corporations into pledges of loyalty—this is all part of a plan to seize power.”

Trump’s onetime Svengali, Steve Bannon, who remains close to the President, doesn’t disagree: “He is on a jihad to reform them first by bringing them to heel.”

Foreign leaders are used to that kind of treatment, but even they weren’t expecting Trump’s trade war. To explain his approach to tariffs, Trump favors a metaphor—the U.S. as the world’s department store. “I am this giant store,” he tells TIME. “It’s a giant, beautiful store, and everybody wants to go shopping there. And on behalf of the American people, I own the store, and I set prices, and I’ll say, If you want to shop here, this is what you have to pay.”

If the government's setting prices sounds distinctly un-American, if not outright communist, Trump's own allies in the GOP warned him about the dangers of unleashing the barrage of punitive duties on foreign imports, which ran from a 10% baseline up to 145%. When Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky, a libertarian, texted him a disquisition urging a retreat from tariffs, he says Trump shot back curtly: "TARIFFS ARE GREAT!"

The markets disagreed. Within a week of "[Liberation Day](#)," economists across the U.S. government and at the Federal Reserve were seeing alarming signs. It wasn't the precipitous drop in the S&P 500 that worried them. It was the market in U.S. Treasuries, which were tanking too. Normally when stocks sell off, investors shift their assets into the safe haven of U.S. government bonds, which offer a guaranteed payoff down the road. But now investors were parking their money in the Japanese yen and the Swiss franc instead. Worse, those who were looking to buy U.S. bonds from people who already owned them were having trouble agreeing on what they were worth. "The markets were not working as they normally do," says one observer at the Federal Reserve. "This was extreme stress."



In the face of a bond-market disarray, two of Trump's top aides intervened. On Apr. 9, when one of Trump's most loyal advisers, the trade hawk Peter Navarro, was occupied in another meeting, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick went into the Oval Office to make a plea to Trump: pause some of the tariffs. "Scott and I both agreed it was the right thing to do, and in the end, [Trump] said that makes sense," Lutnick recalls. The two Cabinet heads stayed until Trump posted on Truth Social that he would temporarily lift reciprocal tariffs for 90 days. The markets immediately bounced back, though not to their pre—"Liberation Day" levels.

Trump tells TIME that he's still convinced tariffs are necessary. "The bond market was getting the yips, but I wasn't," he says, adding that he would consider it a "total victory" if the U.S. still has tariffs as high as 50% on foreign imports a year from now. Trump says China's President Xi Jinping has called him, and that his Administration is in active talks with the Chinese to strike a deal. Lutnick and another senior Administration official confirmed the talks, which Beijing disputes. "I don't think that's a sign of weakness on his behalf," Trump says of Xi, adding that he expects to have a full slate of deals announced over the next three to four weeks. "There's a number at which they will feel comfortable," Trump says. "But you can't let them make a trillion dollars on us."

Trump's foreign transactionalism goes beyond tariffs. He has threatened an armed confrontation and economic warfare with Denmark, a NATO ally, [to take over Greenland](#). He has said he wants to take back the Panama Canal even if it results in a military engagement against guerilla fighters. He's also proposed displacing Palestinians from Gaza to turn it into a seaside vacation destination, what he calls "the Riviera of the Middle East."

In some of these moves, one can discern tactical or strategic goals: [Greenland has mineral resources](#) the U.S. could use and is key for the growing competition in the Arctic. But others see more personal aims. Upon taking office, Trump paid homage to his expansionist designs by borrowing a painting of President James Polk from the House of Representatives and hanging it prominently in the Oval Office. A champion of manifest destiny, Polk oversaw the largest expansion of U.S. territory in history, acquiring Oregon, Texas, California, and most of the American Southwest. Asked if

he'd like to be remembered for having expanded American territory as President himself, Trump says: "I wouldn't mind."

He may more likely be remembered for having broken with decades of foreign policy embraced by Republican and Democratic Presidents, alienating NATO allies, and siding with Russia in its war with Ukraine. In his interview with TIME, Trump blamed Kyiv for initiating the war. "I think what caused the war to start was when they started talking about joining NATO," the President says. The negotiated peace he is pursuing would hand Vladimir Putin some 20% of Ukrainian territory. "Crimea will stay with Russia," Trump says.

The President prides himself on having mobilized Europeans to contribute more to their security and for advancing peace between Israel and some Arab neighbors in his first term. He hopes to make further progress on this last front on a planned trip to the Middle East. "Saudi Arabia will go into the Abraham accords," he predicts. "That will happen." He feels more confident, more ambitious, less encumbered by guardrails than he did in his first term as Commander in Chief. "Last time I was fighting for survival," he tells TIME. "This time I'm fighting for the world."

Trump is not the first President who has expanded presidential power. Franklin Roosevelt summoned wartime authorities to institute rationing and price controls, forcibly incarcerated 120,000 Japanese Americans in internment camps, and tried to pack the Supreme Court with ideologically aligned judges. George W. Bush restructured the national-security apparatus after Sept. 11, handing the government extraordinary powers to surveil everyday Americans and detained al-Qaeda suspects at extrajudicial black sites abroad. Both those Presidents were dealing with attacks on the U.S. Trump's second-term presidency is unlike anything his predecessors attempted.

Trump's approach to power looks like that of foreign leaders like [Viktor Orban](#) of Hungary and [Recep Tayyip Erdogan](#) of Turkey, argues Steven Levitsky, a Harvard University scholar. Those strongmen have won legitimate elections but then stacked the democratic decks in their favor by rewarding allies, punishing adversaries, crippling the media and civil society,

and turning the state into an instrument of their own agenda and political preservation. “This is actually much faster, much more thoroughgoing than what we saw the first 100 days in Venezuela or Turkey or Hungary,” he tells TIME. “What worries me most has been how slow U.S. society has responded.”

Some institutions are fighting back. Law firms Perkins Coie and WilmerHale won restraining orders from a federal judge. Harvard University refused to acquiesce. After Trump tried to shut down the U.S. Agency for Global Media, as well as the media outlets it oversees, including Voice of America and Radio Liberty, several brought suits to stay afloat. The Supreme Court has already intervened in several cases. But their capacity to constrain Trump is limited if he defies their orders. “The courts can’t save us alone,” says Levitsky. “The judicial process is slow, and a lot can get broken in the meantime.”

Opponents have howled about the threat Trump poses to the Republic for long enough that for many it’s easy to dismiss the talk of [constitutional crisis](#). Yet the President himself stokes fears of a slippery slope to strongman rule with his blanket assertions of power, his disregard for democratic guardrails, and his [talk of running for a third term](#), despite the 22nd Amendment’s prohibition. “There are some loopholes that have been discussed,” Trump says, “But I don’t believe in loopholes.”

Toward the end of the interview, TIME asks Trump whether he agrees with John Adams, a founder whose portrait he has framed in gold on his wall, who said the American republic was “a government of laws, not of men.” The President pauses to think it through. “I wouldn’t agree with it 100%,” he says. “We are a government where men are involved in the process of law, and ideally, you’re going to have honest men like me.”

Once the tape recorder stops rolling, Trump offers a tour through his private spaces beyond the Oval. Framed copies of magazines with his face on the cover line the walls. He passes into the dining room, where he watched and did nothing as the [Jan. 6 attack](#) unfolded. A gold remote control and two boxes of Tic Tacs sit on the table. On the threshold above the door hangs the boxing belt that [Zelensky](#) left behind after their contentious meeting in late February. He leads his guests into his study, which aides have dubbed “the

Merch Room.” There are two white breakfronts filled with MAGA memorabilia: hats of differing colors and varieties, gold Trump-branded sneakers, white Trump golf shirts, Trump coffee-table books, towels with his Trump 45/47 logo on them, and challenge coins featuring the Trump family crest inside the seal of the President of the United States. It may not be the traditional image of American presidential power, but it is his.

—With reporting by Alex Altman, Massimo Calabresi, Sam Jacobs, and Nik Popli/Washington, and Leslie Dickstein and Simmone Shah/New York

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‘Peace Be With You’: Pope Leo XIV Steps Onto the World Stage

Baker is an award-winning foreign correspondent based in Rome. She has reported for TIME from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe.



“Peace be with all of you!” Those were the first words of [Pope Leo XIV](#), the newly anointed leader of the Catholic Church.

As Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost addressed the ecstatic crowd gathered in St. Peter’s square, he used the world’s most famous pulpit to promote a vision that, of late, has been more of a wish than reality.

“To all people, wherever they are, to all the people of the earth,” he continued, in fluent Italian, “may peace be with you.” He is now tasked with delivering it.

Prevost’s appearance on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica was the culmination of a centuries-old election ritual in which specially selected

cardinals, sworn to secrecy, gathered behind the closed doors of the Sistine Chapel to decide who could best lead the church through a period of immense change. He succeeds Pope Francis, [who died on April 21](#), onto the world stage, and will be expected to continue in the globally beloved leader's path toward a more open, inclusive church that advocates for the poor and the marginalized.



The voting began on Wednesday night with an inconclusive result. Another three rounds were held on Thursday, before Cardinal Prevost obtained the required two-thirds majority. The fact that the voting took less than two days, on par with the selection of Francis in 2013, shows that the cardinal-electors were largely united in their choice of a man known for his solid judgment, his sharp insight, and a steady hand to lead the church through a tumultuous time.

A new name and an old cape

The papal tradition of a cardinal taking a new name as he is announced pope symbolizes his rebirth as custodian of the church. The chosen name often signals the direction the new Pope intends to take. By choosing the name Leo, Prevost was making a powerful statement. Pope Leo XIII, whose turn-of-the-20th century pontificate straddled a period of global upheaval defined by the industrial revolution, was known for his defence of the rights of workers, his advocacy for immigrants and his care for the poor.

“In many ways, Pope Leo XIII was very conservative, but on social issues, he was very strong. I’m guessing that Cardinal Prevost wanted to signal his commitment to social justice in the tradition of Pope Francis,” says Brett C. Hoover, a theology professor at Loyola Marymount University in California.

Read More: [As the Conclave Concludes, Catholicism Is at a Crossroads](#)

Still, the fact that Prevost donned the traditional ermine fringed red cape that Francis—in a sign of his commitment to humility—refused to wear at his own anointment in 2013, signals that Leo XIV plans to take a more conciliatory approach to church conventions, even as he expands on other aspects of Francis’ legacy.

In his short address to the faithful, Prevost praised Francis’ commitment to outreach and inclusivity and laid out his own plans for continued dialogue and a church “a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close, especially to those who suffer.”

Prevost’s public embrace of pontifical tradition alongside Francis’ provocative agenda balances the concerns of a church leadership split over issues of doctrinal purity. A calm and thoughtful leader, according to those who know him, he is a Francis with sanded down edges.

The least American American

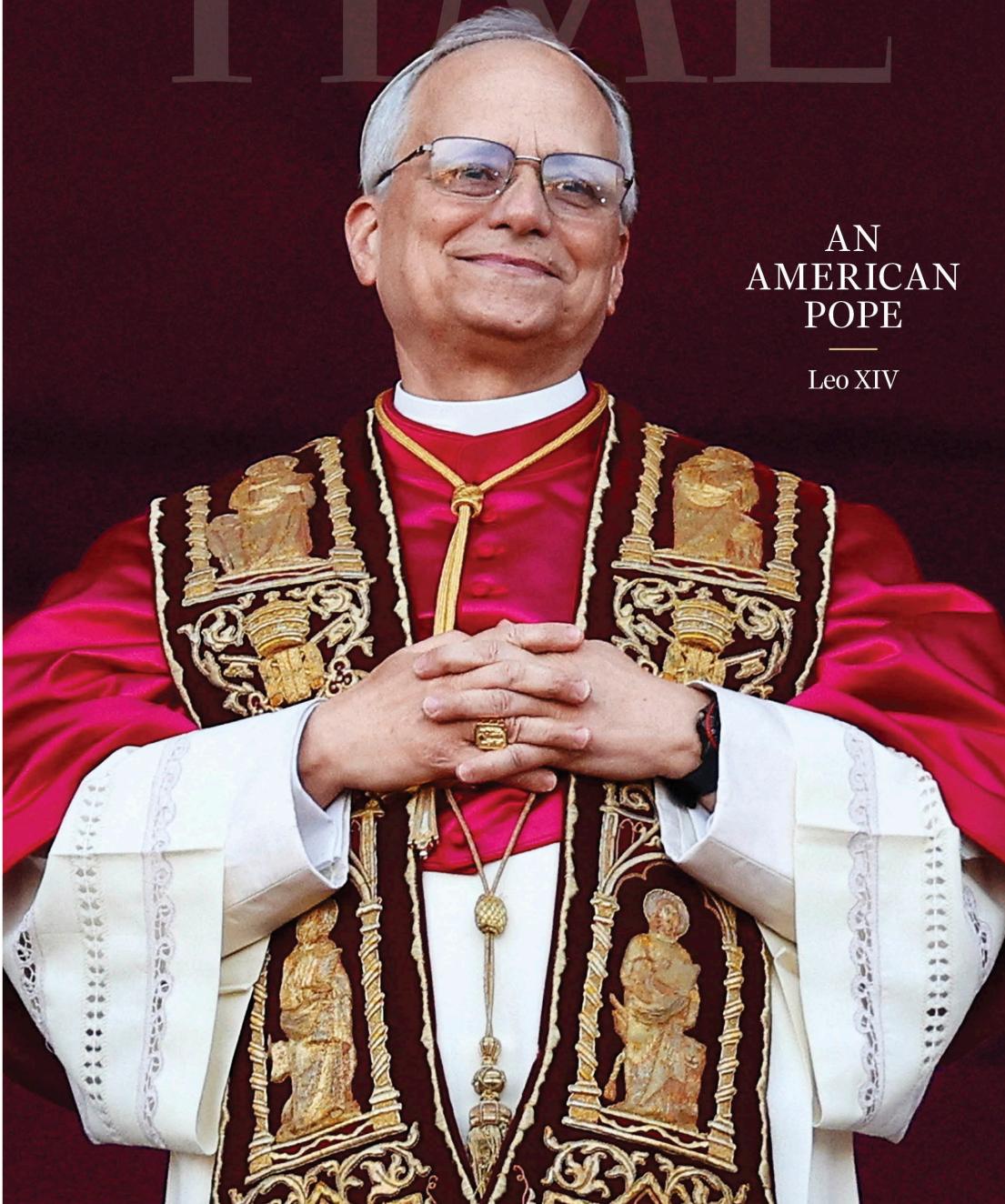
Born in Chicago to a family with Italian, French, and Spanish roots, Prevost, 69, will be the first Pope from the United States the Catholic Church has ever seen, and only the second Pope from the Americas, [after Francis, who was from Argentina.](#)

MAY 26, 2025

TIME

AN
AMERICAN
POPE

—
Leo XIV



time.com

He attended a high school run by an Augustinian seminary, then went on to get a degree in mathematics at Philadelphia's [Villanova University](#). He has spent most of his life outside of the United States. Ordained in 1982 at the age of 27, he went on to serve as an Augustinian missionary, parish priest and eventually a bishop in Peru, where he spent more than two decades. Francis made him a Cardinal in 2023.

As an American with Peruvian citizenship who spent most of his career serving the world, he is uniquely poised to balance the demands of a global church against the worst impulses of an isolationist America.

After addressing the crowds gathered in front of St. Peter's Basilica in flawless Italian, he thanked members of his Peruvian diocese in perfect Spanish. Notably, he did not say a word in English, thank the people of Chicago, or refer to his American origins in any way. That was deliberate, says Hoover. "He was saying, 'I'm an American, but I'm a different kind of American. I'm not a nationalist; I'm a person that cares about the entire world.'"

That didn't stop U.S. President Donald Trump from congratulating the newly minted Pope in a social media post soon after the announcement. "It is such an honor to realize that he is the First American Pope," Trump wrote. "What excitement, and what a Great Honor for our country. I look forward to meeting Pope Leo XIV. It will be a very meaningful moment."

Read More: [*World Leaders React as Robert Francis Prevost Becomes Pope Leo XIV*](#)

Close confidants describe Prevost as reserved, almost shy. But they uniformly laud his ability to listen. "In meetings he was like a sponge," says Father Andrew Small, who has worked with Prevost on several high-level church commissions. "He's a listener and his questions tell you he's processing what you're saying. It doesn't mean you know what he's thinking, but you know that you've been heard."

Pope Leo XIV comes to prominence at a pivotal time, when principled leadership is more vital than ever. He faces ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, along with the politically divisive, but

morally urgent, issues of migration, religious freedom, human rights and the climate crisis. He will have to navigate a surge in right-wing nationalism, as well as a potential economic slump that threatens the world's most vulnerable.

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The power of the papacy extends far beyond Catholicism's 1.4 billion followers. The pope may not have the military or economic power of other leaders, but he has the moral authority that most global leaders lack.

"Whatever its weaknesses, the church has always—at least over the past 150 years—given priority to people on the margins. And we need that more than ever in an era of America first and Fortress Europe," says Richard Lennan, a professor of Theology at Boston College. "We need someone who can speak up for the poor, the marginalized, the displaced on the world stage. Even if people just nod politely and move on, we still need that voice." With his stated commitment to build a "united church, always seeking peace and justice," Prevost made it clear that he would be that voice.

Read More: [*The Biggest Challenges Pope Leo XIV Faces*](#)

The Church's need for a counter to Trump's brand of America-first global realignment likely played a role in Prevost's selection, says Lennan. "He's the least American American. It wouldn't surprise me at all if that was part of the thinking of the Cardinals, that they wanted someone who could keep challenging attitudes and actions that disregard the value of human lives."



A hard act to follow

As Leo XIV takes up the pope's miter, many will expect him to build on Francis' legacy. It will be a difficult undertaking.

Francis' criticism of capitalism's excesses, his calls for world leaders to respond to the warming climate, and his impassioned advocacy for migrants made him globally popular. Yet within the church, his reformist interpretation of church doctrine—"Who am I to judge?" he famously [responded](#) when asked to weigh in on gay priests—set off a polarizing struggle between modernists and traditionalists. So too has his radical approach to inclusivity that welcomed the non-ordained faithful, including members of the LGBTQ+ community and lay women, to sit with bishops and contribute their thoughts on issues of church doctrine in meetings called synods. It is this vision of synodality—the church as a listening one instead of a top-down teaching one—that was at the core of Francis' progressivism, and the biggest threat to traditionalists who seek stability by maintaining the power and influence of church leadership.

Read More: [*Pope Francis' Greatest Achievement Was Emphasizing Mercy*](#)

To the relief of many in St. Peter's Square, Pope Leo confirmed his belief in the consultative process. "We want to be a Church of the Synod," he said.



Unfinished business

Francis leaves behind a lot of unfinished business that the new pope will have to address. During his 12-year pontificate Francis galvanized liberals—both Christian and secular—by breaking longstanding church shibboleths. He said that divorced and remarried Catholics could [take communion](#), and he allowed priests to bless same-sex unions. He brought up other controversial issues, such as the ordination of women as Catholic deacons, whether or not married men can become priests in regions where vocations are rare, and the use of birth control, but failed to offer a definitive take, frustrating many of his followers.

Church members will pressure Prevost to offer clarity on these and other pressing issues facing the modern church. How he leans is a bit of a mystery, says Lennan. As a missionary who spent most of his life outside of the United States, he was able to stay out of the culture wars that define American Catholicism. “On these issues, he’s the great unknown. There’s a difference between the person you are the day you get elected and who you are as pope.” How he responds to these questions will either cement Francis’ progressive legacy or demonstrate that it was a temporary aberration.

Read More: [Where Pope Leo Stands on Specific Issues](#)



Pope Leo also faces challenges of a more practical nature, such as the Vatican’s parlous financial state and its diplomatic ties. One of the hallmarks of the Francis pontificate was a groundbreaking agreement with Beijing that allowed the Chinese Communist Party leadership to weigh in on church appointments within the country. A few days after Francis’ death—an interregnum known as sede vacante, the empty seat, when all leadership decisions are put on hold—Beijing [unilaterally named](#) two bishops,

including one to replace a Vatican favorite. Leo's response will set the tone for his approach to Beijing's increasingly overt challenges to Vatican authority, as well as its [persecution](#) of underground Catholic clergy in a country that is home to approximately [20 million](#) Catholics.

Read More: [What to Know About the Vatican's Relationship With China—and What the Next Pope Means for It](#)

The Catholic community's contentious history with sexual abuse—and its coordinated efforts to cover these instances up—remains an ongoing issue that Pope Leo will not be able to avoid. The advocacy group [Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests](#) has criticized Prevost for not doing enough to address sexual abuse, and for failing to follow up on accusations against priests under his jurisdiction.

"He clearly has a great sense of empathy, especially for the vast numbers of Catholics and people in general in the global south and elsewhere who live in unspeakable poverty and injustice," says Small, who was the former Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Protection of Minors under Francis. "But by being in touch with such massive amounts of suffering, one might unwittingly relativize the pain of a much smaller group of people in the church who are victims or survivors of sex abuse committed by its members or mismanaged by its leadership. We all have something we need to work on, and I think that is an area that needs urgent attention."

Pope Leo is inheriting a church in financial distress, says John Allen, a longtime Vatican analyst and the editor of Crux, a catholic magazine. Donations are down, the budget is beset by [\\$94 million](#) deficit and its pension system is grievously underfunded. "The Vatican is, to be frank, a bit of a mess right now, particularly with regard to its finances. It's facing a ticking financial time bomb." One that Pope Leo will have to diffuse quickly.



For the secular world, one of Francis' most important contributions was his stance on climate change. His seminal [Laudato Si'](#) encyclical, a 176-page pastoral letter on the religious importance of caring for the planet, sparked a climate movement in the catholic church that echoed through the temples and mosques of the world's other great religions. As the inheritor of that green mantle, Pope Leo will be expected to maintain the Vatican's commitments on climate change while urging world leaders to do the same.

"The planet, our own survival, is at stake," says Father [Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam](#), a professor at Rome's Salesian Pontifical University.

As cardinal, Prevost was known as a passionate environmentalist. In a 2024 seminar on climate change in Rome, Prevost [reiterated](#) the Holy See's commitment to protecting the environment and urged countries to move "from words to action... Dominion over nature"—the task which God gave humanity—should not become "tyrannical," he said. It must be a "relationship of reciprocity" with the environment. Given his background in Peru, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, he will likely keep carrying that banner.

Francis' shadow looms large, but ultimately, Pope Leo XIV is the successor of Peter, the first pope, not Francis, the most recent one. He will make his own mark, and the faithful will follow. The rest of the world will take note.

Correction, May 9

The original version of this story misstated when Francis first made Prevost a Cardinal. It was September 2023, not February 2025.

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How Taylor Jenkins Reid Became a Publishing Powerhouse

Feldman is an Editorial Director at TIME, where she oversees the Women of the Year franchise and coverage of books and authors. She is a member of the TIME100 editorial team.



Taylor Jenkins Reid is leaning against a railing in the sun outside Los Angeles' famed Griffith Observatory. We've picked this place to talk about her ninth book, [Atmosphere](#), a space thriller and love story set at NASA in the 1980s, but as the iconic Hollywood sign shines in the hills behind her, the scene feels almost too on the nose.

Reid, despite her ability to blend in with the tourists milling about, is not just any author. She is one of the most successful novelists working today, her books not only beloved by readers but also hot commodities in the film and TV industry. *Atmosphere*, out June 3, is poised to be one of the biggest books of the summer, if not the year, with a movie adaptation already planned. So it feels a bit inevitable when a man in a backpack taps her on the shoulder, his phone camera open.

Then the plot twist: “Will you take a picture … of us?” he asks, gesturing to his wife and son. Reid gamely starts snapping, bending down to get the right angle.



“I’m chasing a feeling. Maybe it doesn’t matter if I’m fancy. Maybe I’m just fun.”

-Taylor Jenkins Reid

[Buy a copy of the Taylor Jenkins Reid cover here](#)

While this family clearly has no idea who Reid is, there are many, many people for whom this encounter would be huge. Despite grumbles that no one reads anymore, Circana BookScan data shows book sales are up—there were more than 797,000,000 print books sold in the U.S. last year, up 2% from 2023 and 14% from 2019. And the contemporary women’s fiction category, where Reid is often listed, ended 2024 with a nearly 30% increase in sales over 2019 numbers, according to analyst Kristen McLean. But in recent years, as celebrity-led book clubs have proliferated and TikTok has driven demand, a select group of authors—Reid, [Colleen Hoover](#), [Emily Henry](#), Kristin Hannah, and romantasy favorites [Sarah J. Maas](#) and [Rebecca Yarros](#) among them—have become the North Stars of the industry. They’re not just popular writers; they’re brands, known entities with whom fans feel a deep connection.

Reid’s novels—which center and largely appeal to women, who have long bought more fiction than men—create conversations on social media, have been selected by heavy hitters like [Reese Witherspoon](#) and Jenna Bush Hager for their book clubs, and virtually all are being or already have been adapted; [Daisy Jones & the Six](#) became an Emmy-winning series. Reid’s eight novels before *Atmosphere*, five of which are *New York Times* best sellers, have sold more than 21 million print, e-book, and audiobook copies in 42 languages, per her agent. And, according to two industry sources, the scuttlebutt is that she recently signed a five-book deal for an eye-popping \$8 million—per book. (Her agent declined to confirm.)

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Given all this, you’d be forgiven for thinking that Reid, 41, might be a little miffed by the lack of recognition at Griffith. But where she grew up in Acton, Mass., vanity was a strict no-no: “You would never want to be caught thinking you were something.” So she’s still trying to reconcile her “uncool life in the Valley,” where she lives with her husband and daughter, with how the world responds to her work. When people ask how she feels about having another best seller or the fact that [Serena Williams](#) wants to work

with her, she isn't quite sure how to react. "Well, what do you want me to feel?" she thinks. "Like I'm hot sh-t?" None other than Stevie Nicks expressed interest in collaborating on *Daisy Jones*, but, for Reid, it still feels like this can't be real life. "That happened to somebody else, I think," she jokes. "It happened to Taylor Jenkins Reid, right? God bless her. Good for you, babe."

If you spent any time on BookTok in 2021, you probably saw young women, faces streaked with tears, sharing their love for Reid's fifth novel, *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*, which had been published four years earlier. This followed Witherspoon's 2019 selection of *Daisy Jones* for her book club—and her announcement that she would produce an adaptation.

Publishing, like so many industries, changed with the pandemic. "Both because people suddenly had time to read, and also with the arrival of BookTok in late 2020, genre fiction like romance and authors like Hoover and Reid took off," says McLean. After *Evelyn Hugo* went viral, suddenly readers were looking for other books by Reid—many of them, according to Barnes & Noble senior director of books Shannon DeVito, arriving in stores to film content and find backlist titles. Word of mouth has always been key to an author's success. "It can't be reverse engineered," Reid says. "It just happens when it happens."

That it would happen for Reid, though, was hardly expected, especially considering she didn't originally set out to write books. The woman who now regularly fields offers to put her work onscreen initially wanted to be in the movie business.

She got her start as a casting assistant, but began writing on the side, even finishing a manuscript that was never published. In 2012, she asked her husband how he'd feel about her taking time off to focus on fiction. Within a month, she had a draft for what became her first novel, *Forever, Interrupted*. That book, published in 2013, sold poorly. Her second, *After I Do*, didn't do much better.

But once readers found Reid's books, the appeal was clear. *Evelyn Hugo*, *Daisy Jones*, [2021's *Malibu Rising*](#), and [2022's *Carrie Soto Is Back*](#), a

loosely connected quartet, tell the stories of women navigating the pressures of fame in male-dominated spaces. Reid's storytelling feels immersive—she takes you deep inside the worlds she builds, and delivers the gossipy details you want to hear. Her protagonists are specific, bold, and unapologetic. They have a way of lingering with you after the story ends. "You feel like they're just sort of out there, living in the world somewhere," says Ballantine publisher Jennifer Hershey, Reid's editor on her four latest books, including *Atmosphere*.

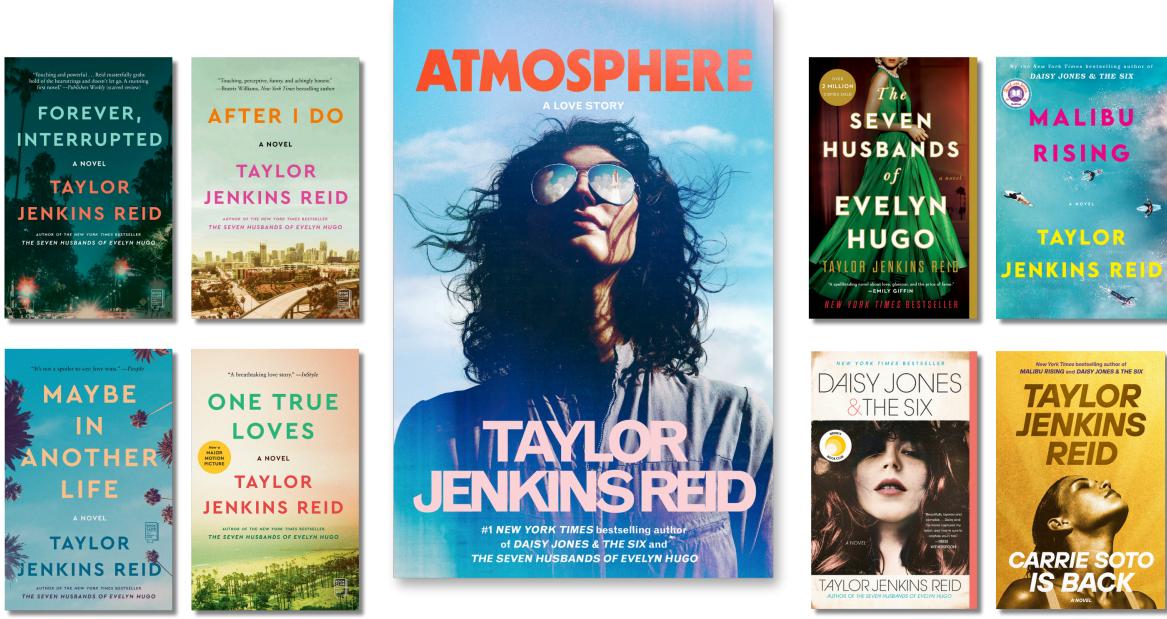
The romance novelist [Emily Henry](#), a close friend of Reid's, finds something "healing" in her work. "So many of us do have fears about being too much or too little, or not performing our womanhood correctly, not being friendly enough or pretty enough or passive enough or sparkly enough," says Henry, whose latest novel *Great Big Beautiful Life* is a No. 1 New York Times best seller. "I love that she writes these women who are very aware of how the world sees them and how they may fall short in the eyes of others, and their arc is never about trying to change that thing or trying to justify their existence."

Reid's books are also, as more literary readers might say, "easy to read," often looked down upon by highbrow critics. She says her aim was always to write the kind of novels you could binge in a weekend, but the more she published, the more reviews came in, and she found herself chafing at the criticism: "Oh, this person said they liked my book, but they didn't find it to be high art. How can my sentences be better? How can my work be more literary? I fell into that trap quite a bit, looking for approval." When *Malibu Rising* came out, Reid was proud—she thought this multigenerational family drama, of all her books, would be the one embraced by the literati. The reviews "leveled" her. One person called it "Candy Land Franzen." She remembers how she talked herself out of the sting. "Because I know you're trying to insult me, it hurts," she says. "But I am not writing as complex stories as Jonathan Franzen—that wasn't the point. So it probably is Candy Land Franzen. And maybe I *love* being Candy Land Franzen."

Writing a book that's easy to read, Reid contends, is extremely difficult. She has to think about the reader's experience on every page. "I'm chasing a feeling," she says. "Maybe it doesn't matter if I'm fancy. Maybe I'm just fun."

An estimated 16 million unsolicited manuscripts are submitted to agents' "slush piles" each year, according to Laura McGrath, a professor at Temple University who uses data to study literature and literary culture. To get published at all, even if you sell poorly, is a feat. "It's just sad to me, when I talk to aspiring writers and they'll talk about Taylor Jenkins Reid as though anyone could do this," McGrath says.

Libby McGuire, publisher of Atria—which published *Evelyn Hugo* and reportedly won Reid back from Ballantine with that massive deal—emphasizes that there's a path to success as an author without ascending to the level of a phenomenon. If you rely solely on the *New York Times* best-seller list, she says, you might miss books that are still selling well over time. "When I talk to my friends at other houses, everyone has these books that are quietly succeeding," McGuire says. "It's just that they're selling 2,000 to 3,000 a week." But the lack of transparency around advances and sales, combined with sensational stories like Reid's, leads to a skewed perception of what success looks like for a typical author, McGrath says. "We lose sight of the fact that there is a workaday writer churning out a book a year or a book every couple of years, who is making a reasonable living or still has a day job."



In the Penguin Random House antitrust trial three years ago, the publishing giant revealed that only 35% of its books are profitable and of those, 4% bring in the majority of profits, suggesting that the company runs on the success of just a tiny handful of authors. To some in the industry, the gap between what authors like Reid are offered—face time with internal sales reps, booksellers, and media, marketing and publicity support, the opportunity to tour—and what the majority receives is unfair.

Reid reportedly got less than \$100,000 when she sold *Evelyn Hugo*—somewhere between \$50,000 and \$99,000, per Publishers Marketplace—which seems laughable now that it's sold more than 10 million copies. But she feels fortunate to have started small. "You could say, well, publishers should put all of the energy equally behind all the books. But if they do that, they can't publish as many," she says. "The only way they were going to publish *Forever, Interrupted* was to take a chance on me, give me a low advance, not put a ton of energy behind it, and see what happened." For companies that take a volume approach, the real boon is when one of the smaller bets, like *Evelyn Hugo*, becomes a runaway hit.

“I always describe it as like a game of Hungry Hungry Hippos,” says Reid’s agent Celeste Fine, who specializes in representing big-name writers like Nicholas Sparks and [Jennifer Weiner](#). “Authors to these corporations are just like marbles, like *nom nom nom*.” Over the years, Fine has observed a “mission creep,” where publishers expect not only exceptional books, but also marketing and sales acumen, engagement on social media, and the ability to entertain a crowd on tour. It’s as if they’re saying, “Not only are we paying for the book—now we own a piece of you, the human, and you should be grateful,” Fine says. She believes an author like Reid deserves to be treated like a business partner: “She has earned the right to be as certain about what she’s getting out of the next 10 years of her career as any CEO with their benefit packages.”

There are no guarantees in publishing, but *Atmosphere* is a solid bet. The novel follows Joan Goodwin, an astrophysicist who joins NASA’s space-shuttle program in the early ’80s. There she meets Vanessa Ford, a woman who challenges her understanding of who she is. In Reid’s first thriller, she pumps up the stakes with a disaster on the shuttle in the first few pages.

She studied the works of Andy Weir, read about [Apollo 13](#), and pored over NASA documents. Paul Dye, a retired NASA flight director, helped her untangle the technical details. But for all of Reid’s research, the idea for the book really started with a desire to tell a particular type of story. “It just felt like time for me to write a very high-stakes, dramatic love story,” she says. She asked herself: “What is my *Titanic*? ”

Reid knew she wanted to explore how intimate a connection could be between one character in space and one on the ground, and that those characters would both be women. She also knew this choice would lead her into another debate about identity. Who is allowed to write what type of characters has long been a fraught subject in publishing, with some arguing that authors should write only from perspectives they inhabit and can therefore be trusted to represent truthfully, and others encouraging the ideas of allyship and creative freedom. Though Reid is white, some of her characters are not, and the way she wrote Carrie Soto, a Latina, in particular yielded some criticism she took to heart. “What I was being told was I don’t

have the range necessary to pull off what I'm trying to pull off," she says. So when it comes to race, for now she'll stick to what she knows.

Her response was not the same when it came to writing about sexuality, but then neither was her experience. The publication of *Evelyn Hugo*, ultimately a love story about two women, led to questions about why Reid, who is married to a man, writes queer characters. "I am very private," she says. "So at first, I just sort of let people assume what they were going to assume." But now, as she prepares for the topic to resurface around *Atmosphere*'s release, Reid wants to be very clear about something those close to her have always known: she is bisexual. "It has been hard at times to see people dismiss me as a straight woman, but I also didn't tell them the whole story," she says.

When Reid was a teenager, she began expressing herself through her appearance. "I got hit pretty quickly with, Why can't you dress more like a girl? Why don't you do your nails? Why do you talk that way? Can't you be a little bit quieter?" she says. "I started to get people who would say, 'Oh, I get why you dress like a boy—you're gay.'" But that label didn't feel right to her—her first love was a boy, and still people told her to just wait and she'd see. Then, when she fell for a woman in her early 20s, her friends also doubted her for that. "This was the late '90s, so nobody was talking about bisexuality. And if they were, it was to make fun of people," Reid says. "The messages about bisexuality were you just want attention or it was a stop on the way to gayville. I found that very painful, because I was being told that I didn't know myself, but I did."

Reid's husband, the screenwriter Alex Jenkins Reid, recently came across the idea that a person's identity is like a house with many rooms. "My attraction to women is a room in the house that is my identity—Alex understood this book was about me spending time in that room," Reid says. "He was so excited for me, like, 'What a great way for you to express this side of you.' And he helped me get the book to be as romantic and beautiful as it could be."

Reid knows being married to a man gives her "straight-passing" privileges that others in the LGBTQ community do not have, so she wants to speak thoughtfully about what it means for her to share this part of her life. "How do I talk about who I really am with full deference to the life experiences of

other people?” she asks. “Basically where I came down is I can talk about who I am, and then people can think about that whatever they want.”

As our conversation shifts back to *Atmosphere* and its other themes, she leads me to the basement level of Griffith Observatory and stops in front of her favorite exhibit, a representation of time since the creation of the universe made with more than 2,000 pieces of jewelry in celestial shapes.

“This is 400 million years after the Big Bang, and we’re only right here,” she says, gesturing to the long wall as we walk. We pass the billion-year mark, the 10-billion-year mark, and still we have yet to reach the moment when human life began. “You start to realize the amount of time a human is alive is so short, and yet all of our problems seem immense,” Reid says. To her, it’s reassuring. No matter what any one of us does, the universe will keep expanding.



The next day, at an open-air café in West Hollywood, we sit down for lunch beside a 20-something actor describing his recent Nickelodeon gig. This seems as good a place as any to talk about the many projects Reid has in development.

There are the previously announced adaptations of *Carrie Soto*, executive produced by Serena Williams, for Netflix; *Malibu Rising*, which was with Hulu but, Reid's producing partner Brad Mendelsohn tells me, now needs a new distributor; and *Forever, Interrupted*, executive produced by and starring Laura Dern and Margaret Qualley, in development with A24 for Netflix.

But there's also news: Reid and Mendelsohn envision a global theatrical release for *Atmosphere*, and just brought on Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, the duo behind *Half Nelson*, *Mississippi Grind*, and [*Captain Marvel*](#), to write and direct. And, independent of her adaptations, Reid and her childhood friend Ashley Rodger wrote a jukebox Chicks musical, *Goodbye, Earl*, about two friends who team up to kill one's abusive husband, with the Chicks signed on as executive producers. "It's got *Thelma and Louise* vibes," says Mendelsohn, a partner at Circle Management + Production. "It's a story about what you would do to protect your friend," Reid says. "I'm writing it from how I feel about Ashley, and she's writing it from how she feels about me. There were a lot of tears, and a lot of making each other laugh."

Meanwhile, fans can't stop talking about even the projects for which there is no news. Stevie Nicks herself has expressed her eagerness for a second installment of *Daisy Jones*. And, though the show was released more than two years ago, star Riley Keough still sees posts from people pleading for more. "Being able to play—or watch or read—a woman who's beating her own drum is inspiring. It speaks to something within all of us, the desire for that freedom of self," Keough says. That said, she doesn't have high hopes for a return: "The way the show was made very much wrapped it up."

And for years, fans have speculated about casting for a promised Netflix *Evelyn Hugo* movie. So many have clamored for Jessica Chastain to play the redhead actress Celia St. James that she's had to clarify multiple times that it's not happening. [Ana de Armas](#) and Eiza González, meanwhile, have both expressed interest in playing Evelyn. (Emily Henry's vote is for de Armas: "I

know that she already played Marilyn Monroe, but she's an even more perfect Evelyn Hugo.") "We're not casting until we have a script that's ready," Mendelsohn says. "There's so much attention on it because of the fan base that there is a pressure to get it right."

Reid, the former casting assistant, says she has strong opinions but is keeping them to herself. One thing she will share is her desire to update the story. *Evelyn Hugo* came out just months before #MeToo went viral. "There was no Harvey Weinstein conversation when I finished that book," she says. "We have a real opportunity here to further that conversation, and to make the movie better than the book."

For all the glamour that Hollywood projects bring, Reid is clear on the real benefit of adaptations. She thought the money she'd get from selling screen rights would be what changed her life. "But actually you need the movie, the TV show, whatever it is, to come out and be a hit," she says. That's what gets your books back on display and readers back in stores, which shows your publisher they should invest more in you. "If you can get that snowball going once, you can ride that goodwill for a while."

And, ultimately, that's the point: longevity. Reid wants to be the kind of author who can experiment with genre, write whatever she wants to write, and still be embraced—like Stephen King, whose brand is so much bigger than any given book. "It's a lot of pressure," Reid says. "But the thing I try to keep in mind, and that my agents certainly help me keep in mind, is that you have to keep your eye on what the actual goal is: I hope I produce work that makes people happy often enough that they'll give my next one a chance."

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How We Chose the TIME100 Most Influential People in Health of 2025



A surprising sentence post-2020: This year is unlike any other in the history of global health. With the confirmation of anti-establishment leaders [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#), [Dr. Marty Makary](#), and [Dr. Jay Bhattacharya](#) to the U.S.'s top health positions, President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the defunding of [USAID](#), health

professionals are scrambling to understand whether their work can continue, and, if not, what will happen to patients. In a year of such upheaval, the [TIME100 Health](#)—100 people who are most influential in the world of health right now—looks a bit different.

A lot is happening.

To select these 100 individuals, our team of health correspondents and editors, led by Emma Barker Bonomo and Mandy Oaklander and with guidance of Dr. David Agus and Arianna Huffington, spent months consulting sources and experts around the world. The result is a community of leaders—scientists, doctors, advocates, educators, and policy-makers, among others—who are changing the health of the world.

There are pioneers, like Australian Prime Minister [Anthony Albanese](#), who, stricken by the alarming statistics of the teen mental-health crisis, took on Big Tech to ban kids under 16 from social media in his country. And there are innovators, like [Tomas Cihlar and Wesley Sundquist](#), who came up with Gilead's lenacapavir, a new way to treat HIV with only two shots per year.

[Dr. Peter Lurie](#) is a leader who, as president of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, has been lobbying to get cancer-linked synthetic food dyes out of our diets for decades, and, in January, finally succeeded with the banning of Red Dye No. 3 in U.S. foods. [Princess Kate Middleton](#) catalyzed a powerful conversation about rising cancer rates in young adults when she spoke out about her own diagnosis at age 42.

Then there are the titans, like World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General [Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus](#), on the cover of this issue. Faced with losing its largest funder and most powerful member when the U.S. withdrew from the organization in January, Ghebreyesus is pivoting to make a more nimble WHO focused on establishing health independence in developing nations, while holding out hope for talks with President Trump. TIME spent time with Ghebreyesus at WHO headquarters in Geneva, where he spoke candidly about past mistakes and the path forward for global health.

Whether the individuals on this list are familiar or entirely new to you, the work they're doing is changing the lives of people in your community and around the globe. Later in May, TIME will gather the TIME100 Health members in New York City for an exchange of ideas about how to make a healthier world.

[Buy a copy of the TIME100 Health issue here](#)

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In Pope Leo XIV, Donald Trump Finds a New Foil

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.

The new Pope is an American. Do not for a minute think he wants to Make America Great Again.

[Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost](#) on Thursday became leader to the world's 1.4 billion Catholics and took the name Leo XIV. But the former missionary stands to be an ideological check on a certain breed of American-styled

Catholicism, which in recent years has been [ascendant](#) in Washington yet has drifted into more conservative lanes than its global brethren. With Vice President J.D. [Vance](#) and [six](#) of the nine Supreme Court Justices as part of his flock, Leo becomes the most powerful Catholic both in the world and among Americans. And Leo, known in Rome as “The Latin Yankee,” clearly represents a rejection by the Vatican of the [intense lobbying](#) from rich Americans to [install](#) a pontiff sympathetic to President Donald Trump, who went so far as to joke he should be a simultaneous Pope and President.

Read More: [*Trump Plugs a Dark-Horse American Candidate for Pope*](#)

“Congratulations to Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, who was just named Pope,” Trump posted to his social media site. “It is such an honor to realize that he is the first American Pope. What excitement, and what a Great Honor for our Country. I look forward to meeting Pope Leo XIV. It will be a very meaningful moment!”

[Perhaps](#). But like his predecessor, Pope Francis, there’s a very good chance that Leo and Trump will clash on serious issues like immigration, human rights, and the environment. The new Pope has a history of amplifying messages in support of racial justice and gun safety, and against capital punishment.

Read More: [*Where Pope Leo Stands on Specific Issues*](#)

Another collision between the civic leader of the United States and the sacred leader of the Catholic Church seems inevitable, especially given Trump’s obsession with a [nationalistic](#) agenda that would co-opt Christianity in service of his political goals. Within hours of his election, the MAGAverse seemed to be gunning for the new pontiff in nakedly political terms.

While Trump rushed to the White House driveway to [praise](#) the Chicago-born and Villanova-educated Leo, his legion of fans were less laudatory. “**WOKE MARXIST POPE**,” tweeted far-right activist and Trump ally Laura Loomer, who also called Leo “just another Marxist puppet in the Vatican.”

Read More: [*How Villanova Feels About Having the New Pope as an Alum*](#)

That's not to say Leo is the "social-justice warrior" that the online army of MAGA supporters would suggest. His [views](#) on same-sex marriage and transgender rights are in keeping with conservative Catholic teachings, making him to the right of his predecessor. His handling of abuse allegations is an issue that is going to [dog](#) him. And while profiles cast him as an engaged spiritual leader, no one is expecting him to bring the charisma of Francis.

To be sure, pre-papacy Leo has been a frequent critic of Trump, especially on his approach to immigration. Dating back to 2015, he shared on social media a piece critical of Trump, whose policies he described as "problematic" and carrying "anti-immigrant rhetoric." A decade later, then-Cardinal Prevost turned his eye to Vance, a convert to Catholicism just [six years](#) ago, over his use of his newfound faith to justify the Trump team's crackdown on migrants. "Jesus doesn't ask us to rank our love for others," he wrote.

Read More: [*The Biggest Challenges Pope Leo XIV Faces*](#)

His last posting before heading into the no-phones-allowed conclave to pick a Pope was to criticize Trump for his joint [appearance](#) with Salvadoran President [Nayib Bukele](#) where the pair made the extra-judicial deportation of an immigrant into a punchline.

For his part, Trump flirted with blasphemy in recent weeks, [suggesting](#) he might be a candidate to lead the Catholic Church and even posting an apparently A.I.-produced image of himself in the papal regalia. White House allies suggested it was an ill-considered joke, but plenty of Catholics deemed [even](#) the suggestion offensive. By Thursday afternoon, Trump was bursting with pride about having an American lead the Vatican for the first time in history.

Read More: [*World Leaders React as Robert Francis Prevost Becomes Pope Leo XIV*](#)

That dynamic and underlying tension between Leo and Trump will color global affairs and domestic politics in the coming years.

Roughly one in five Americans identify as Catholic, making it a sizable voting bloc that no political pro can ignore. Historically, Catholics make up roughly a quarter of the electorate, reflecting a higher level of civic engagement than other faiths. And they are politically pliable: Trump won them with 59% of the vote last year; Biden, only the second Catholic to serve as President carried them with 52% four years earlier; and Trump carried them with 50% support in 2016.

Still, this moment of profound pride for American Catholics comes as they are trying to figure out just how much to read into Leo's selection. With every new Pope, the voting Cardinals are sending a message. But was Leo selected because he is an American or did it have more to do with how he spent much of his career in Peru and was a kindred spirit of the late Pope Francis, who hailed from Argentina? It's far too soon to know, but plenty of players in Washington are looking for clues. The stealth contender broke through the byzantine Vatican politics and may yet break Washington's understanding of how the Catholic machinery operates around the globe. It's a puzzle best not left to guts or guesses for too long.

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The True Meaning of an American Pope

Hale is a Democratic politician from Tennessee; he has been a Catholic nonprofit executive and helped lead faith outreach for President Barack Obama.

On May 8, I stood on the colonnades of St. Peter's Square on the beautiful afternoon a new Pope was elected, shoulder to shoulder with pilgrims from every corner of the globe. The roar that erupted when white smoke billowed from the Sistine Chapel chimney is something I'll never forget.

The earth beneath my feet shook as the bells of the ancient basilica tolled. And then the announcement: the unknown Robert Francis Prevost had been elected the Vicar of Jesus Christ. The Cardinal-electors had chosen a Midwesterner to be the successor of St. Peter.

As the red velvet drapes parted on the balcony, we knew we were seeing the dawn of a new era for the Church—and, in some ways, for America too.

For the first time ever, the most famous American in the world is not the President or a Hollywood icon or tech billionaire—it's the Pope.

This is more than a Catholic triumph; it's a cultural watershed for the U.S. In a society that often equates American influence with might or money or celebrity, now our foremost representative on the global stage is a humble man in white robes, preaching love, justice, and mercy.

For all the lofty historical comparisons, sometimes the ordinariness of this moment is what strikes me most. After the white smoke cleared and the crowds drifted home singing hymns, I did something utterly mundane: I pulled out my phone and shot off a text to an old contact I had in my phone from a decade past. Except, that old contact is now the Pope.

I thumbed, hitting send with a mix of giddy disbelief and pride. Almost immediately, the message bubble turned green, undeliverable.

Of course it did. Father Bob had traded his iPhone for the Fisherman's Ring, and his private cell number was probably deactivated by the Vatican within minutes of "Habemus Papam."

I laughed at myself for thinking I could just text the Pope, but the impulse itself says so much: we Americans are used to our leaders being just a tap away, and for a moment I had forgotten that my countryman on the balcony was now a universal pastor with an entirely different life.

Still, the very fact that the new Pope had a number in my contacts list is a testament to his accessibility and American-ness.

For an American Catholic like me, that hint of shared culture is both charming and reassuring. It reminds us that the papacy isn't an abstract institution; it's held by a person, and now that person happens to hail from our own shores.

Pope Leo XIV's election has instantly made the rituals of the Vatican feel a touch more familiar to Americans—and perhaps made the idea of holiness feel a touch more attainable.

Beyond the novelty and pride, many of us are looking to this new Pope with a deeper longing: Could this be a moment of moral and institutional renewal for America? It's no secret that our country has been sorely divided in recent years. We've endured bruising political fights, a crisis of truth and civility, even an insurrection and the ongoing temptation of authoritarian politics. Trust in institutions is at a historic low; faith communities themselves are riven by conflict. Americans, in short, are hungry for healing—a restoration of integrity in our public life and compassion in our communities.

In this context, the first American Pope feels providential. Who better than an American, steeped in the ideals of liberty under God, to remind the world that faith and freedom stand together against loneliness and isolationism?

Don't be surprised if he soon uses his moral pulpit to gently, but firmly, push back against the siren song of authoritarian leaders—be they on the international stage or lurking in our domestic politics. His voice, coming from an American who cannot be dismissed as "anti-American," might uniquely rally the conscience of our people. At the very least, his example of servant leadership—prioritizing the poor, dialoguing with opponents, renouncing worldly power—is a much-needed antidote to the cynical power grabs we've grown accustomed to.

This is a time when America's image is often tied to loud, combative nationalism and a cult of personality. How poetic, then, that as we turn the page, the world's spotlight shifts to an American known for quiet service and spiritual depth. Pope Leo XIV's rise doesn't erase our nation's struggles, but it does offer a new narrative for what American leadership can mean. It suggests that America's greatest export might not be our entertainment or weaponry, but our capacity for moral vision.

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‘It’s a Game Changer’: Mineral Deal Raises Hopes of GOP Uniting Behind Ukraine

Bennett is the senior White House correspondent at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C., bureau. He has covered wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, interviewed world leaders, traveled across the globe with President Trump and President Biden, and written extensively about intelligence, immigration, and the fallout of major disasters.

Popli is a political reporter at TIME, based in the Washington, D.C., bureau, where he covers Congress and the White House. In 2025, he was selected for the National Press Foundation’s Paul Miller Washington Reporting Fellowship.



A landmark agreement for Ukraine to hand over half of its future oil, gas and mineral wealth to the U.S. may be thawing a cold war within the Republican Party.

For more than a year, Republicans have been at odds over the war-torn country, with Trump-aligned lawmakers skeptical of continued involvement and national security hawks intent on countering Russia's continued invasion. But several Republicans in Congress told TIME Thursday that the deal gives both factions what they need: a path to continued support that could be sold to voters as either a business arrangement or a moral obligation—or both.

"Yesterday was a very bad day for the dictator and war criminal, Vladimir Putin," Senator Roger Wicker, a Kansas Republican and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, tells TIME. "The door is now open for more aid. It's a game changer."

The deal, completed on Wednesday after months of negotiations, will give the U.S. a 50% stake in all new oil, gas and mineral projects and infrastructure inside Ukraine and will be used to fund Ukrainian purchases of U.S. weapons systems. The terms, which still have to be ratified by Ukraine's parliament, seem to have dissolved weeks of tension between the inner circles of President Donald Trump and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky after Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance dressed down Zelensky in a heated Oval Office exchange.

Read more: [Zelensky on Trump, Putin, and the Endgame in Ukraine](#)

The U.S. has provided more than \$66 billion in military assistance to Ukraine since Russia launched a full scale invasion of the country in 2022. In recent months, Trump and Congressional Republicans have balked at sending more U.S. assistance to the country, pressuring Ukraine to make territorial concessions to Russia in exchange for a ceasefire agreement. But Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to have overplayed his hand by continuing to launch fatal strikes into Kyiv during the talks, frustrating Trump and exposing how little influence he has with the Russian leader.

While the agreement does not offer Ukraine the security guarantees it had long sought, it does, in effect, give Trump and his allies a tangible, economic rationale for maintaining U.S. aid. For long-time Ukraine-backers in the Capitol, the deal revives the prospect of Congress appropriating more funds to Ukraine as early as this year. “This puts American skin in the game,” Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma tells TIME. Senator Joni Ernst of Iowa calls the agreement a “huge breakthrough” that allows Trump “to say to the American people that the Ukrainians will pay us back, and we can continue providing the military aid to defend something we are really invested in.”

The joint U.S.-Ukraine investment fund will be administered by both countries and financed through revenues from future energy and mineral projects, including those tied to Ukraine’s vast reserves of lithium, titanium, and rare earth elements, according to a Trump administration official. Existing operations will remain fully under Ukrainian control, and ownership of all resources will remain with Ukraine. But going forward, Kyiv would be required to match any new U.S. military assistance with a resource-based contribution to the fund.

Zelensky’s leadership team was buoyant about the terms. “This is excellent news—we’re feeling optimistic,” says a foreign policy advisor to Zelensky who was involved in the negotiations. Ukrainian negotiators were able to “take out all the really onerous stuff” proposed by the U.S., the adviser says, leaving a deal in which the costs to Ukraine “look minimal.”

While the deal lacks an explicit promise the U.S. will protect Ukraine from more Russian incursions, giving the U.S. a financial stake in the country’s future may be the next best thing. “This is probably as close as we’re going to get to security guarantees with this administration,” the advisor tells TIME.

A former senior Ukrainian official had a more measured reaction, noting that the agreement doesn’t change much on the battlefield. “It’s hard to call this a security guarantee. The Americans can tell the Russians not to attack any projects with US investment. But that does not give security to the rest of the country,” the former official says.

The reaction from Democrats was also mixed, with some warning that the deal risks turning U.S. foreign policy into a pay-to-play operation. For lawmakers who had long supported Ukraine based on shared democratic values and geopolitical interests, the shift to an explicitly transactional arrangement was jarring.

“My worry is that Trump will succumb to the bully Putin,” Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer tells TIME. “He’s doing these elaborate dances, but the proof of the pudding will be if he stands up to Putin, if he stands up for Zelensky, when they’re going to sign a real agreement.”

Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, who recently introduced a bipartisan bill that would impose new sanctions and tariffs on nations buying Russian energy, describes the mineral deal as “a positive step” but “largely symbolic.” “It’s meaningless in the immediate practical terms,” he tells TIME. “But it could be a stepping stone toward Trump reaffirming our support for Ukraine in military as well as economic terms.”

Senator Chris Murphy, another Connecticut Democrat, was even more critical, dismissing the deal as pointless since “Donald Trump is rooting for the destruction of Ukraine.” He pointed to reports that Ukraine’s most resource-rich regions are in areas Trump officials have encouraged Ukraine to give up as part of a ceasefire.

“My sense is that [the deal] likely has no teeth in it, and it likely has to do with mineral deposits that are in the Russian-controlled territories that Donald Trump has already said will remain permanently in Russia’s hands,” Murphy tells TIME.

Lawmakers and analysts in Ukraine and America on Thursday were still poring over the details of the deal, particularly the mechanics of the joint U.S.-Ukraine investment fund. Even though accessing the country’s minerals is years off, the way the fund is structured may provide Ukraine with immediate help in its war effort, says Mark Montgomery, a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral and a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

For Ukraine to continue to fend off the Russian advance, the Ukraine military needs the U.S. to continue to provide real-time intelligence, specialized missiles for Ukrainian fighter jets, and missiles for Patriot batteries that are defending Ukrainian civilians. In recent months, Trump and other Republicans were threatening to cut off all of that.

Over the long term, if this arrangement actually leads to the extraction of valuable minerals, it will “more deeply integrate the United States into the future of Ukraine,” says Montgomery. That shared interest is what Ukraine’s leaders—and Republican hawks—have been pitching to Trump for months, and this deal may have established the right way to get his attention—with dollars and cents.

—*With reporting by Simon Shuster*

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‘No One’s Coming’: Inside Gaza as Israel Expands Its Military Control

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



As Israeli drones buzz overhead and food supplies dwindle, Oday Basheer moves quietly through Deir al-Balah, helping run a community kitchen for displaced Palestinians. The daily threat of airstrikes has become routine. “It’s just a press of a button and my story is ended,” he says.

Basheer, whose kitchen has partnered with World Central Kitchen (WCK), no longer tracks the headlines. “No one’s coming. No one’s going to stop this war.”

On Monday, Israel confirmed what many in Gaza had feared: its military will seize the territory indefinitely, calling up tens of thousands of reservists to significantly expand operations. The timing, according to a defense official speaking to the Associated Press, may hinge on President Trump's visit to the region next month.

"I will not do the dreams that I wanted to achieve," Basheer tells TIME from Gaza. "More than 50,000 people were killed during this genocide."

WCK has suspended operations in Gaza twice in the past year after Israeli strikes [killed seven](#) in April 2024 and [three last November](#).

As of April, [at least 408 aid workers](#) have been killed, deepening the crisis for Gaza's 2 million residents already enduring a near-total blockade.

How Will Israel Expand Military Operations?

The war began after a Hamas terror attack killed more than 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals on October 7, 2023, with the militants seizing some 250 hostages. As of May 6, more than 52,000 Palestinians [have been killed](#), according to its Health Ministry.

Israel's plan marks a turning point in the nation's war strategy – [one that NGOs and human rights groups warn](#) will only escalate the humanitarian catastrophe inside Gaza.

While Israeli forces have previously advanced deep into Gaza during the war, a sustained military presence has largely been confined to a 1km buffer zone along the border. In April, that zone was expanded, denying Palestinians access to more than half of the territory.

"There will not be an in-and-out," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a video released on social media. "We're not going to enter and then exit the area, only to carry out raids afterward. That's not the plan. The intention is the opposite."

"We want Israeli security control," Eli Cohen, a Member of Israel's security cabinet, told [Israeli public radio Kan](#). "That means that anywhere in Gaza, at

any time, we will be able to act.”

“We are not interested in managing civilian life. We’re talking about four things: Israeli security control, Hamas not being the sovereign, demilitarization, and advancing President Trump’s voluntary emigration plan,” he said.

The Israel Defense Forces declined TIME’s request for comment.



What Has Been The Reaction To The Plan?

Thousands of reservists are refusing call ups, [having recently signed letters](#) to Netanyahu calling for an end to the war, and [attendance amongst reserves](#) is reportedly only 60% in recent weeks.

The strategic pivot comes after Hamas appeared to rule out further cease-fire talks. On May 6, senior official Basem Naim [told AFP](#) there was “no sense”

in further negotiations while “the hunger war and extermination war” continued.

Naim urged international pressure on Netanyahu, [who still faces an International Criminal Court arrest warrant](#) issued in 2024 over alleged war crimes.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes tells TIME that “President Trump remains committed to securing the immediate release of hostages and an end to Hamas rule in Gaza.”

Inside Israel, families of hostages still held by Hamas have criticized the new military strategy. The Hostages and Missing Families Forum [told Haaretz](#) the government’s plan prioritizes territory over lives. “This decision will be remembered as a cry for generations,” the group said.

As part of the new strategy, Israel also plans to overhaul how aid is distributed, shifting responsibility away from the UN and toward Israeli-controlled hubs.

The UN Humanitarian Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory [criticized](#) the proposal, warning that it risks forcing civilians into militarized zones and violates humanitarian principles.

Medical Aid for Palestinians also condemned Israel’s plan, calling it a “dangerous attempt to weaponise humanitarian aid.”

In the statement, Interim CEO Stephen Cutts said: “This plan violates the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence, and impartiality, and would knowingly deprive millions of vital aid.”

How Much Food And Aid Is Getting Into Gaza?

Two days after the Hamas attacks on October 7 2023, Israel [announced a full blockade of aid](#) entering Gaza including electricity, fuel, and water. This blockade [was in effect until October 21 later that month](#).

Israel resumed attacks on the Gaza Strip in March, ending a cease-fire deal with Hamas that had been in place for nearly two months. Since then, there has also been a '[near-total blockade on the delivery of aid](#)' entering the territory according to the United Nations.

Basheer says he and his family have been assisting a kitchen in Deir Al-Balah to cook and distribute food from their home every day for displaced families.

"Everyone needs food now because they can't get it from the markets," Basheer says.

Juliette Touma, communications director for UNRWA, says Gaza's humanitarian crisis worsens with each passing week.

"It's the basics for the survival of human beings, nothing has been allowed in. It's more than two months now," she tells TIME.

How Much Of Gaza Has Been Destroyed?

In April, the UN [estimated](#) that about 92% of all residential buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed —equivalent to about 436,000 homes.

This has created nearly 50 million tonnes of debris, something which could take decades to fully clear under current conditions. The UN estimates that 11,000 bodies are still trapped underneath rubble across the strip.

Gaza's education system has also collapsed. According to [a March report](#), over 95% of schools in Gaza have been damaged, and 62% of schools used as shelters for displaced civilians have been hit directly.

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How Mark Carney Won Canada's Pivotal Election

Maher is a longtime Canadian political journalist and the author of [*The Prince, The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*](#).



Donald Trump's name wasn't on the [ballots Canadians marked on Monday](#), but he looks like the night's big loser.

[Mark Carney won](#) the election by [running against Trump](#) every day for six weeks, delivering an anti-annexation message that allowed him to bring the Liberal Party back from the grave, a sudden, 30-point turnaround without precedent.

In January, the race looked like a lock for [Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre](#), who had been leading the [deeply unpopular Justin Trudeau](#) in the

polls for more than two years. Poilievre had convinced Canadians that the Liberals needed to be fired, and he was measuring the drapes in the Prime Minister's office.

"[Canada is broken](#)," he said, over and over again, and [many agreed](#).

He put together a stable-looking coalition of support for his [plan to axe the consumer carbon tax](#), [defund the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation](#), crack down on crime, and fire the gatekeepers blocking housing and free enterprise.

Then Trump started [threatening to make Canada the 51st state](#), terrifying Canadians. Desperate Liberals finally managed to ditch Trudeau and replaced him with Carney. Overnight, Conservative support [tanked](#), which left them wondering where they had gone wrong.

Ontario's Conservative Premier, Doug Ford, has [some ideas](#) about that. A folksy, larger-than-life gladhander from suburban Toronto, he won a third majority government in February by promising to protect Ontario during the trade war. As a former fan of the U.S. president, he reflected the sense of betrayal that Canadians feel after their longtime ally and only neighbor turned on them.

Ford [sat down](#) with Carney for a friendly breakfast in a Toronto diner in March. The stuffy central banker and the down-to-earth businessmen got along well, and have formed a good-cop-bad-cop team trying to manage the never-ending threats from south of the border.

That gave Carney a crucial boost. "Ford signalled to voters in the Greater Toronto Area that Carney was a change from Trudeau, especially on the economy," says Gerald Butts, an advisor to both Trudeau and Carney. "A bunch of voters who had closed their minds to the Liberal Party under Justin Trudeau got interested in Mark Carney."

Whereas Poilievre had been slow to react when Trump started calling Trudeau "[governor](#)," blaming the Liberals for failing to take action on border security instead of forcefully rebutting Trump's attacks.

That didn't fly in Ontario, which does about \$500 billion CAD in annual trade with the U.S., and almost 100,000 jobs depend on the auto business. Nor did it in much of the rest of the country. "We saw in a period of roughly six weeks, 8 million voters moving from different places to the Liberal Party of Canada," says pollster Frank Graves, of EKOS Research. "That is not something superficial or casual. There was a visceral force driving this. That force was the recoil effect from Donald Trump 2.0 cavalcade of craziness that was going on."

A swifter change in tone on Trump might have kept Poilievre in the race, but he has a reputation as a fierce attack dog, not a coalition builder. For years, Poilievre's take-no-prisoners attacks on the Liberals were influenced by the MAGA movement, which made him a [fearful figure for progressives](#).

That helped cause large numbers of voters who normally support the left-wing NDP and the separatist Bloc Quebecois, also on the left, to [shift to the Liberals](#). The electorate has somewhat polarized, so Canada looks more like a two-party system, with the Liberals the bigger party.

Since Poilievre is so unpopular with much of the electorate, he had no option but to try to convince Canadians that Carney was unfit for office. But Carney, a rookie to politics, has a strong resume. He steered the Bank of Canada during the 2008 financial crisis, and then the Bank of England during the Brexit years.

Poilievre's Tories called him "[sneaky](#)," said he was "just like Justin," and accused him of dishonesty. Their friends in the media even trotted out former British Prime Minister Liz Truss—whose premiership [did not outlast a head of lettuce](#)—to attack him, but nothing worked.

Carney can't fire up a crowd like Trudeau or Poilievre, but his bland aura of confident competence has reassured a rattled nation.

And though Carney looks like a centrist, he has promised to [increase spending](#) beyond Trudeau's record-setting deficits, arguing that Canada needs to build its way out of the trade war that threatens to plunge the country into a recession.

Poilievre had a shot if the election was about taxes and spending, taking steps to improve affordability, and get the economy moving, but Trump would not stay out of it. On election day, he [posted a message](#) to the “Great people of Canada,” urging Canadians to choose to become “the cherished 51st. State of the United States of America.”

Canadians don’t want that, and it will now be Carney’s job to make sure it doesn’t happen.

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Social Media Platforms Shouldn't Own Your Identity

Contributor

Contributor



Access to online services is as fundamental to modern life as electricity or water. And just as we expect our electricity to be reliable and our water to be clean, we should have high expectations for the internet. Today, our data represents our personhood; it encompasses our relationships, our thoughts, our interests, and the memories we create each day. That information should be controlled by us—not by Big Tech. Utah's groundbreaking new [Digital Choice Act](#) will help make that goal possible by finally giving people agency over their data on [social media platforms](#).

When the law takes effect on July 1, 2026, it will mark a bold step toward giving people—not social media platforms—control of their personal

information. Under the Digital Choice Act, individuals will be able to use open-source protocols to seamlessly move their content and relationships to new apps if they are unhappy with the experience on a social media site. This portability and interoperability will give people the freedom to manage their digital lives without losing years of personal history. The law also gives people the power to delete all of their data when they decide to leave a platform.

For years, it has been common wisdom that [social media is not the product](#) —we are. Indeed, users do not pay for access to social media platforms, social media platforms sell our attention to advertisers. The Digital Choice Act flips that relationship around to put users back in control.

Today's social media giants use addictive algorithms to hook users, harvest data, and manipulate behavior for profit. Research has exposed how these practices [harm society](#), especially [young people](#). Americans are [demanding action](#).

Laws like the Digital Choice Act put people first. They lower barriers to competition and open the door for new social media platforms. History shows that interoperability works: the Telecommunications Act of 1996 spurred innovation in mobile services and broadband, driving over [\\$2 trillion](#) in private investment into the telecom sector. The UK's open banking reforms of 2018 unlocked [a wave](#) of fintech startups.

As it stands today, people's livelihoods and digital personhood are continually at risk because companies control their data. We see this lesson playing out far too often. On January 19, when TikTok [temporarily shut down](#), millions of Americans lost access to the relationships and content they had created over many years. The Digital Choice Act would have allowed users to take their data, content, and communities from [TikTok](#) and move these valuable assets to the alternative platform of their choice.

Many others fall victim to arbitrary decisions by platforms that have no meaningful oversight and provide little recourse, appeal, or ability to leave. Laws like the Digital Choice Act allow creators and everyday people on social media to migrate their content and communities to other platforms that are better positioned to meet their needs. The law also enables people to

share posts across other platforms in real time in order to reach their friends and communities wherever they are.

The underlying problem of platforms effectively holding our data captive—and using it against us—is emerging as a defining challenge of our time. It is at the root of a business model that is harming our children, polarizing our neighborhoods, and undermining our national security. The Digital Choice Act starts by addressing these issues with social media where the harms are arguably most acute. However, the recent [bankruptcy of 23andme](#), which put the DNA of the company’s 15 million customers at risk, is a reminder that these questions have far broader implications. The consequences will only become more extreme as artificial intelligence drives larger portions of the economy and the internet. It is urgent that we fix this before it’s too late.

Utah has long been a leader in [digital privacy](#). In 2024, Utah passed two laws (S.B. 194 and H.B. 464) to safeguard minors, enhance parental controls, and hold social media companies accountable for mental health harms. As policymakers and parents, we have a duty to go further.

We urge other states, other countries, and the federal government to follow Utah’s lead. Data rights are human rights. They should be protected by law.

If people have the power to move their information across platforms, it will permanently change a broken system that is hurting our kids, communities, and country. Data interoperability is possible: social media platforms already [have access to open-source](#) protocols that make our information portable. Millions of people are set to benefit as better laws and better tech facilitate data portability and app interoperability.

We can no longer accept a status quo where corporations hold the keys to our online lives. It’s time to build a future where individuals own and control their digital identities. Shouldn’t you own you?

Spencer Cox is the Governor of Utah and outgoing chair of the National Governors Association.

Frank H. McCourt Jr. is the executive chairman of McCourt Global, founder of Project Liberty, and author of “Our Biggest Fight.”

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Why Trump and the Saudis Are Cozying Up

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On Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump will open the [first multicountry foreign trip](#) of his second term with a stop in Saudi Arabia, underscoring that ties with Riyadh remain a Trump priority. (He'll also [visit Qatar and the United Arab Emirates](#).) While a hoped-for diplomatic breakthrough normalizing Saudi-Israeli relations will have to wait—at least until the Gaza war ends—plenty of [other opportunities](#) will allow Trump and Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman, known as MBS, to leave their meeting claiming diplomatic victory.

The Saudi need for a U.S. security guarantee is less urgent than during Trump's first term. Iran, still the Saudis' main regional rival, is now [far weaker](#) after Israel's battering of its allies Hamas and [Hezbollah](#) and the [ouster](#) of Tehran-aligned Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad. It's also unlikely Trump could deliver the two-thirds Senate super-majority needed for a formal defense treaty.

But even without the Israeli piece of the diplomatic puzzle, Trump intends to offer a new level of defense cooperation, including a public pledge to defend the kingdom if attacked by Iran or its remaining allies. That list may no longer include the Houthis. On May 6, Trump announced a surprise cease-fire with the Yemeni rebels, ending U.S. airstrikes in exchange for a halt to Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping. The deal, which [notably excluded Israel](#), was brokered by Oman and lets Trump claim a win that reduces immediate threats to Saudi oil infrastructure ahead of his visit.

The kingdom is also seeking access to cutting-edge U.S. technologies, like advanced semiconductors for its expanding tech and AI sectors—an area in which it lags behind the neighboring UAE. To secure that access, Washington will insist that Riyadh curtail high-level tech cooperation with China.

The two leaders will likely announce a [landmark civil nuclear-cooperation agreement](#). The Saudis want the ability to enrich their own uranium, allowing for both civilian energy development and potential military use. U.S. negotiators have pushed for restrictions on their ability to develop their own fuel cycle along with rigorous inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. A compromise may emerge allowing limited enrichment under U.S. supervision. They will also sign [trade and investment deals](#) worth hundreds of billions of dollars. Just days after Trump's Inauguration, the crown prince [pledged to invest \\$600 billion](#) in the U.S. He may offer more specifics this month.

Trump and MBS will also discuss Iran and Yemen, both still serious security headaches for Riyadh. The crown prince needs to shield his

ambitious Vision 2030 reform and development plan from threats by the Houthis and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Without a formal defense pact with Washington, maintaining the current thaw with Tehran is especially important—particularly if pressure from Israel or the Trump Administration provokes Iran to retaliate against America's regional partners.

To avoid becoming a target, the Saudi government [sent](#) Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman to Iran in April—the highest-level visit between the two nations in decades. Riyadh has also offered to mediate U.S.-Iran negotiations over the future of Tehran's nuclear program and possible sanctions relief.

And while the U.S.-Houthi cease-fire reduces tensions, it remains fragile. Any renewed escalation—for example, caused by [ongoing Houthi attacks on Israel](#)—could still provoke retaliation against Saudi oil infrastructure or U.S. bases in the kingdom.

For all these reasons, the U.S. President and Saudi crown prince will be all smiles and lavish promises during Trump's Middle East trip. But the realities of the region—in Gaza, Iran, and the waters off Yemen—carry risks both are determined to avoid.

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My Dad's Death and the Forgotten Half of America's Gun Crisis

Rockeman is a Brooklyn-based writer and journalist. She is working on a memoir about suicide, loss, and grief.



On the morning of my dad's death ten years ago, it took me ten minutes to choose what to wear, toast a blueberry waffle, and pour chai into a thermos. It took ten minutes to drive myself to school and choose a spot in the parking lot designated for high school seniors, a cohort that I finally belonged to. Within the next ten minutes, I opted to leave my umbrella in my car and arrived at calculus class with damp hair.

Each of these quick decisions unfolded in the same amount of time it likely took my dad to plan and execute his suicide.

In the months leading up to his death, my dad struggled with double vision and a limp that doctors couldn't get to the bottom of. It's possible that those symptoms were caused by neurological damage from two brain tumor surgeries he had when I was young, or from another condition like multiple sclerosis, though he never received a diagnosis.

Even so, my dad's suicide was shocking. Despite his physical impairments, he worked every weekday, ran with me on the beach, and advised me on my college applications. He showed no obvious signs of depression. Even the people closest to him didn't know the depth of his pain, because of his calm, reserved demeanor. In a tribute that my dad's coworkers published after he died, his boss wrote that he would be "remembered for his laid-back California surfer style, masking a dedicated professional who was easy on the smiles and rigorous in his follow-up."

The time between deciding to end one's life and performing self harm is, often, no more than ten minutes, according to a 2021 [study](#) of unsuccessful suicide attempts. Following whatever intrusive thought my dad had on that December morning a decade ago, it wouldn't have taken more than ten minutes for him to write his suicide note on the desktop computer, walk upstairs to the printer, and bring it back to the office where he would kill himself. I hate to imagine it took only a few more minutes for him to get the gun down from the top shelf of the closet—a gun I didn't even know he owned—and load it.

My dad was not vocal about being a gun owner. The only guns I'd ever seen him use were the BB guns we learned how to fire at the father-daughter camp we visited in the San Diego mountains every fall of my elementary school years. He taught me how to look through the viewfinder, aim at the tower of soda cans fifty feet away, and puncture the aluminum with tiny holes. Was this enough practice for him to know how to use the gun that would kill him? Did he have to read an instruction manual? Watch a YouTube video? Perhaps, then, the time between wanting to die and executing his suicide was far more than ten minutes. I'll never know.

What I do know is that access to a gun made my dad eight times more likely to die by suicide, primarily because firearms are the most lethal suicide method, according to a 2020 [study](#) by researchers at Stanford University. When a gun isn't available, suicide attempts are typically "not fatal, and most people who attempt suicide do not go on to die in a future suicide," the researchers wrote. Owning a gun, in other words, can turn an intrusive thought into a death much faster and more effectively. It is impossible, then, not to place some of the blame for my dad's death on the gun, and to wonder if he would be alive now if he hadn't inherited it from his grandfather thirty years before.

I am haunted by the thought that, in the split second between pulling the trigger and impact, my dad might've realized all that he would miss by leaving my mom, sister, and me, and wished to change his mind. Ken Baldwin, who survived after a suicide jump off the Golden Gate Bridge when he was twenty-eight, told [The New Yorker](#) in 2003 that, while in mid-air, he "instantly realized that everything in my life that I'd thought was unfixable was totally fixable—except for having just jumped."

Could issues in my dad's life have been fixed if he didn't have the swift way out that the gun provided? He was scheduled for an eye surgery to repair his double vision just three weeks after his suicide, which surely would've improved his daily life. And with more time, it's possible doctors would've found a solution for his limp, which was especially frustrating, given that his favorite activities were skiing and running. At a minimum, maybe he could've seen a psychiatrist who would help him realize that staying alive meant watching just one more episode of *Lost* with me, or summiting another mountain with my grandfather, or meeting my sister's baby, his first grandson.

The United States is home to the highest gun ownership [rate](#) in the world. Since the [Second Amendment](#) was ratified in 1791, firearms have been regarded as "necessary to the security of a free State." While gun ownership over the last few decades has been [dominated](#) by conservative, white men, recent years have shown an [uptick](#) in gun purchases by liberal Americans and women. I understand this desire for self-protection, particularly for

people who feel increasingly threatened by political violence, police brutality, and crime.

Still, what is often thought of as a form of self-protection is also a personal threat. Of all gun-related [deaths in 2023](#), 58% were suicides. Painfully tragic [school shootings](#) and stories of murder dominate the gun control debate. But in America, we are often more dangerous to ourselves than others are to us.

This was not always the case. In the early 1990s, the [rates](#) of gun-induced suicides and homicides in America were about equal. But in the three decades since, gun homicides have fallen sharply while the gun suicide rate has remained steady. In 2022, the rate of suicides involving guns in the United States reached the [highest level](#) since officials began tracking it more than 50 years ago.

[Research](#) shows that fewer people die by suicide when it's harder to die by suicide. So-called means restriction—the modification of an environment to decrease access to suicide means—is the intervention measure with the strongest [empirical support](#).

For instance, when [Britain](#) removed carbon monoxide from its public gas supply in the 1960s and 1970s, the annual number of suicides in England and Wales showed a sudden, unexpected decline. Gas accounted for nearly half of suicides in the region before the carbon monoxide removal began, and researchers found that those prevented from accessing gas didn't appear to find some other way of killing themselves. Restriction of one method of suicide, in other words, did not inevitably lead to a compensating rise in the use of others.

Of [suicide attempts](#) using a gun, nearly 90% result in death, while only 4% of suicide attempts by other means are [fatal](#). Because suicidal crises are often short-lived, restricted access to the most lethal self-harm methods saves lives. In states with the strongest firearm safety laws—including background checks, waiting periods, and secure storage requirements—gun suicides fell over the past two decades, while states with the weakest laws experienced a 39% increase, according to a [study](#) from Everytown, a gun violence research organization.

“When things are going badly in your life and you feel like you want to die, and then you try to commit suicide, if there’s a gun handy, you will die,” David Hemenway, director of the Harvard Injury Control Research Center, told [Current Affairs](#) in 2023. “If there’s not a gun handy and instead you take 100 pills, medical science can help you and will. Virtually everybody who doesn’t die is happy that they didn’t.”

Laws that require gun owners to secure their firearms when they’re not in their immediate possession have been shown to reduce the youth firearm suicide rate, though those regulations are only [active](#) in five states. There’s also an opportunity to expand laws that temporarily restrict access to guns for individuals at risk of harming themselves or others. These red flag laws, which are in place in 21 states and Washington, D.C., have been found to be an [effective](#) suicide prevention tool.

A handful of local governments and organizations have come up with further solutions. In San Jose, California, gun-owning residents are [charged](#) an annual fee, the revenues from which are used for suicide and domestic violence prevention. And in Missouri, where gun restrictions are minimal, a group called End Family Fire started a campaign in 2022 to promote safe firearm storage practices and encourage families to have conversations about gun ownership.

Being vocal about the dangers guns present to vulnerable people is nearly as important as gun policy. It’s why suicide researchers [recommend](#) that doctors speak with family members about the removal of lethal self-harm methods from the reach of vulnerable kin. And it’s why, after years of either lying about how my dad died or avoiding the subject altogether, I’m no longer willing to be silent.

Roughly a [third](#) of Americans own guns. I can’t help but wonder: If my dad wasn’t part of that group, could his hope have been restored in those ten minutes? Perhaps our cat, Romeo, would have come into the office to sit on his lap, reminding him of the family he held so dear. Or maybe he would have received the text messages from his best friend, sent later that morning, asking how he was doing. Perhaps, when I got home from high school that afternoon, I would’ve arrived to find my dad relaxing in his brown leather chair in the living room, rather than a squadron of police cars

and yellow caution tape. Ultimately, and unfortunately, the answers to those questions are unknowable to me—just as the grief his suicide would cause was unknowable to him.

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.

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Paige Bueckers Takes It to the Next Level

Gregory is a senior sports correspondent at TIME. His work has been cited in the annual Best American Sports Writing anthology nine times. His stories have won awards from the U.S. Basketball Writers Association and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, and his work was named a finalist for Deadline Club and Mirror awards for excellence in magazine writing and reporting on media, respectively.



In early April, three days after winning a national title for the University of Connecticut Huskies and closing out one of the most decorated careers in college-basketball history, Paige Bueckers is chilling out in a dressing room at *The Tonight Show*, where she's scheduled to make a cameo with the championship trophy. Host Jimmy Fallon pops by, assuring her this is the “first of many” appearances. Captain Kirk Douglas, guitarist for house band

the Roots, offers his congratulations as Bueckers saunters down the hallway in her college jersey and shorts to tape a bit. “This is the last time I’ll ever wear the UConn uniform,” she says, not entirely ruefully.

She then puts on a rhinestone-adorned flannel shirt and baggy camo pants and appears on the stage to screams of approval. Bueckers (pronounced *Beck-ers*) is beaming when she returns backstage, having climbed the stairs through the audience, letting a lucky few tap the hefty hardware. “It was a little workout,” she says. “More than I’ve had the last couple of days.”

As much as any sports star on earth, Bueckers, 23, has earned her break from the athletic grind. The past few days have been a whirlwind: a celebration in a Tampa hotel after UConn’s walloping of South Carolina, the 2024 defending champions, in the title game, then back in Storrs, Conn., for a homecoming rally, followed by a Mary J. Blige concert in Hartford. Bueckers’ Fallon stop is one of a number of appearances in New York City, after which she’ll make a quick trip back to Storrs for a parade and then return to New York to officially become a pro. Her selection by the Dallas Wings as the first overall pick will surprise no one but come with another round of fanfare.

Exhaustion, it turns out, is the price of a dream come true. Bueckers joined UConn nearly five years ago, already a sports celebrity thanks to high school exploits elevated by the likes of TikTok and [Overtime](#), a media company that specializes in showcasing highlights of teenage ballers. Her standout first season, in which she became the first freshman to be named college player of the year, and the NCAA’s decision that summer to finally allow athletes to capitalize on their name, image, and likeness (NIL) only expanded her reach. Companies like Nike, Uber, and Gatorade signed her to sponsorship deals (she’s the first Nike NIL athlete with her own player-edition sneaker). In 2024 she became an equity partner in [Unrivaled](#), the startup 3-on-3 league founded by former UConn stars [Breanna Stewart and Napheesa Collier](#) that debuted during the current WNBA offseason, and she will play next season for more than \$350,000, exceeding what she’ll make in the WNBA over her first four seasons. Before even suiting up for a single WNBA game, Bueckers, nicknamed Paige Buckets, has helped propel the explosive growth and popularity of women’s basketball.

But that only captures the high notes. Those who follow the women's game know the cinematic narrative of Bueckers' story: the freshman sensation who was sidelined by injuries only to come back to reclaim her glory. Bueckers entered the NCAA the same year as such superstars as [Caitlin Clark](#) and [Angel Reese](#), but had to sit out a chunk of her sophomore year as well as the entirety of what was supposed to be her junior year. So as her peers went pro, driving up WNBA viewership and excitement, Bueckers took advantage of her remaining eligibility and stayed at UConn, where this past college season centered on her quest to finally win a title. It is, after all, practically a birthright at a school that had won 11 championships since 1995 and boasts such legends as [Sue Bird](#), [Diana Taurasi](#), and [Maya Moore](#) among its alums. Had the Huskies lost, Bueckers would have gone down in history as the first UConn all-time great to fall short of the ultimate prize.

"I don't know if a player has felt more pressure to validate a collegiate career with a championship than Paige has," says Wings executive vice president and general manager Curt Miller, Bueckers' new boss. "How she navigated that and thrived through that was really, really special to witness."

Now Bueckers will exit one pressure cooker and enter another, with minimal rest. The WNBA schedule punishes incoming rookies, especially those like Bueckers who make it to the last day of the NCAA tournament. Celebrate your championship, do media and appearances, get drafted, do more media and appearances, almost instantly report to training camp. Expectations have soared in Big D: Wings ticket prices skyrocketed after Bueckers' selection. In this booming era for the WNBA, Bueckers' rookie campaign—along with other intrigue, like defending [WNBA MVP A'ja Wilson's](#) attempt to return the championship trophy to Las Vegas, and Clark's sophomore year—will be among the biggest storylines of the season, which tips on May 16.

Bueckers delivered something last year's WNBA Rookie of the Year, Clark, couldn't: a college championship. So can she not only transform the Wings into a playoff team—as Clark did for the Indiana Fever in '24—but also push Dallas closer to a title? This isn't the WNBA of old, unspooling under the radar. All eyes are on Paige Buckets. Next woman up.

Bueckers, who hails from Hopkins, Minn., was an athletic tomboy. “There were some times where I would get made fun of because I dressed like a boy, or I only played with the boys. I didn’t play with stereotypical girlie things,” she says. “Sometimes it would bother me. But it never bothered me to a point where I wanted to change.” She tried other sports, like track and softball, as a kid. “She wouldn’t play volleyball because she wasn’t going to wear those tight tights,” says her dad Bob, a software developer.

Basketball, however, was an early favorite. When she was 6, Bob took his daughter to a Minnesota Lynx–Los Angeles Sparks game: [Candace Parker](#) was a rookie for the Sparks and would go on to win both Rookie of the Year and league MVP that 2008 season. “When I get to the league, I want to be her teammate,” Bueckers told her dad. (So close. Parker retired right before last season.)

After watching Bueckers play against older competition when she was in sixth grade, photojournalist Gary Knox sent out a tweet comparing her to Taurasi. “Remember the name: Paige Bueckers,” wrote Knox, whose 2013 missive went viral after UConn clinched its 2025 championship. “Best 6th grade G [guard] I’ve ever seen.”

“Believe it or not, the footwork you see now, the poise, the tight ballhandling on a rope, is what I saw back then,” says Knox. The official Merriam-Webster X account replied to his tweet with a link to “the definition of prescient.”

Videographers began lining the sidelines of her high school and Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) games, so they could record and cut her highlights. “At the time, it was only guys in the NBA, guys in college, guys in high school who were getting mixtapes,” says Bueckers. Outlets like Courtside Films, Overtime, SLAM, and Ballislife invested heavily in Bueckers. “They really placed a bet on me,” she says. In high school she was stunned to see her Instagram following move from the upper 9,000s to 10K. “You see the *K* next to your name and you’re just like, ‘Whoa, what is even happening?’” says Bueckers. She now has 2.5 million followers. That’s an *M* next to her name.

Crowds would linger after games, to get autographs and take pictures with her. “It’d be like, ‘The bus is leaving, Paige, so you’re going to have to get your own ride home,’” says Brian Cosgriff, Bueckers’ coach at Hopkins High School. In 2020, Cosgriff walked into a Foot Locker in Miami, and a stranger recognized his Hopkins High polo shirt. “Hey, that’s where Paige Buckets went,” the guy said to him.

Geno Auriemma, UConn’s Hall of Fame women’s basketball coach, first saw Bueckers before her ninth-grade season. “I just thought, ‘Man, she’s so frail,’” says Auriemma. Cosgriff had nicknamed her Olive Oyl, after the rail-thin Popeye character. “She’s having trouble breathing,” says Auriemma. “I’m like, ‘What’s the big deal about this kid?’” She was a bit under the weather; upon repeat viewing, he was plenty sold. “There isn’t a shot she doesn’t think she can make,” he says. “There’s not an opinion she doesn’t think she can have. This kid’s just a walking definition of confidence.”

Bueckers committed to UConn after her junior year of high school. While she scored 20 points per game as a freshman and broke the school’s record for assists in a freshman season, Auriemma thought she was being too selfless. Given her efficiency—she consistently shot north of 50% from the field and 40% from three-point range in college, which is incredible for a lead guard—he had a point. “I said, ‘You know, you’re torturing me,’” he says. “Let me give you some words that would never come out of a men’s basketball coach’s mouth to any of their players. Never uttered. ‘Yo, dude, you gotta shoot more.’”



Auriemma compares Bueckers to Dennis the Menace, a rascally young comic-strip character who debuted in the 1950s and a reference lost on Bueckers' generation. "You know, charming, cute kid, means well, but just cannot help themselves," he says. "They have to do something on the court, off the court, say something to let you know that there's some mischief lurking in there." Bueckers would take a defensive risk that would backfire, then go out and make a bunch of shots to make up for it.

UConn reached the Final Four in Bueckers' first year but lost to Arizona in the semis. That summer of 2021, during her acceptance speech for Best Female College Athlete at the ESPY Awards, Bueckers went out of her way to shine a light on Black women "who don't get the media coverage they deserve." Bob and Bueckers' mom, dental-equipment specialist Amy Fuller, divorced when she was 3, and Bueckers has a Black half-brother, who's 12. Black women also had a big influence on her growing up.

Bueckers believes Black women remain undercover. "It's still an issue, every single day," she says. "There's not ever equal coverage." While her on-court accomplishments speak for themselves, she thinks she has an advantage in the endorsement world. "There's white privilege every single day that I see," she says. "I feel like I've worked extremely hard, blessed by God. But I do think there's more opportunities for me. I feel like even just marketability, people tend to favor white people, white males, white women. I think it should be equal opportunity. I feel like there is privilege to what I have, and to what all white people have. I recognize that, I want to counteract that with the way I go about my business."

Bueckers missed nearly three months of her sophomore season because of a knee injury but came back before the NCAA tournament to help UConn reach the championship game, where the Huskies lost to South Carolina. In retrospect, Bueckers says rushing back from that injury did more harm than good. "I was just so dead set on returning, and I don't think my body was necessarily ready for that."

She spent that summer in Storrs, lifting weights and eating as much as she could to build up mass. Then, during a pickup game in August 2022, she tore her ACL in the same knee she'd hurt as a sophomore. Bueckers recalls the

four days before surgery as a low point. “I was just in a really bad place,” she says. “It was almost like I was having an out-of-body experience, to where I didn’t believe it was happening to me. It was straight disbelief. Shock and hurt.” She would be out her whole junior season.

Without Bueckers, UConn failed to make the Final Four for the first time since 2007, but it was during that season that she found a new role for herself: giving motivational talks during games that earned her the moniker Coach P. “Something that was so incredible for me to see was how she handled her rehab process,” says UConn teammate and close friend Azzi Fudd. “She definitely did get down, but she never let anyone see that outside of a select few, in her own space. In public with the team, at the gym, she was always upbeat, making sure everyone else was good.” Bueckers, meanwhile, brought the same ferocity to her recovery that she brings to her game. “I had the mindset of, every single day conquered will be a day closer to me playing basketball,” says Bueckers.

She returned for the 2023–2024 season, which ended in crushing disappointment: a loss in the national semifinals to Iowa and Clark that was decided on a controversial foul call. “I’m still sick about that game,” says Bueckers. “The weeks after it, I just felt so disappointed, frustrated with how it ended. But then, like always, the motivation piece kicks in, where you don’t ever want to feel that feeling again.”

Bueckers started working with a sports psychologist last fall. “In the offseason, I let voices get in my head, where I need to be this aggressive, selfish player,” she says. “That was never going to work for me, that was never going to work for the team.” Three losses before the final stretch of this season—at Notre Dame and at home to USC in December, and at Tennessee in February—tested her. “I wasn’t the best leader at the beginning,” she says. “I still made excuses, still tried to find reasons why I didn’t do something.” Auriemma challenged her to change that behavior and be an even more vocal presence.

“We got more of a sense of urgency,” says sophomore UConn guard KK Arnold. “She always had her speeches before practice. And during practice

we were always engaged, always paying attention, making sure we're doing the little things that we're supposed to do."

Between the Tennessee loss and the national-championship matchup, UConn won 15 straight games by an average margin of 32.1 points. Bueckers' chase for that elusive title was the chatter of March Madness. But during the tournament, Auriemma downplayed that narrative. "I walked in and said, 'Hey guys, anybody know the phrase *win one for the Gipper?*'" says Auriemma. This not being 1940, he explained the basics. "I don't believe in that crap," he told them. "I said, 'This isn't about a crusade to land one for Paige. This is about trying to do something that's really, really hard to do.' And I said, 'Paige, you don't owe anybody anything. You've already given all the people here at Connecticut more than they bargained for. Way more.'"

Still, the night before the April 6 title game, Bueckers started crying while talking to her sports psychologist. "I just wanted to win it so bad," she says. They discussed redirecting her anxiety toward winning each possession, to distract from the end goal: bringing the trophy back to UConn, which last won a championship in 2016. The team's 82-59 victory the next day validated all the effort. "For her to battle through everything and come back stronger than ever," says Arnold, "and be as big a leader as she was, it just makes it 10 times better."

After [WNBA commissioner Cathy Engelbert](#) called her name as the No. 1 draft pick on April 14, Bueckers kept putting her hand over her heart. She did so after hugging her parents, Fudd, and Auriemma, and while watching Wings fans in Arlington, Texas, celebrate her selection. "You're just, like, touching your heart," ESPN's Holly Rowe noted. So in an elevator on the way to a flood of interviews with outlets like *New York* magazine, *Today*, CBS Sports, and *Vogue*, I ask Bueckers about that gesture.

Turns out some nervous perspiration had frayed the adhesive holding her Louis Vuitton blazer in place, and she feared revealing too much in front of 1.25 million viewers. "I didn't feel as trusting in the tape as when the night first started," she says with a laugh. "I did not want a wardrobe malfunction,

that's for sure." A league escort worked the phone to secure some double-sided tape, pronto.



Before the draft, Bueckers and her fellow soon-to-be pros walked the WNBA orange carpet. It was about 40 feet long, though a WNBA official said the league would have needed 100 feet to accommodate all the outlets requesting space. As Bueckers zipped around throughout the evening, she did her best to accommodate fans' requests. "I'm never washing my hands again," a young girl said, jumping up and down after a shake from Bueckers. A boy stood frozen as he witnessed Bueckers descending an escalator. "Oh my God, Paige Bueckers," he said. "Can I get a picture?" Bueckers stopped for the snapshot.

Nike threw her a draft-night celebration, where some 150 of her friends and family danced late into the night. It was there, she tells me at a New York City restaurant a few days later, that it sank in: the UConn chapter of her career is over. "This has been one of the greatest two weeks of my life in terms of happiness and joy, but also, I'll just be sitting in my room and start

crying,” says Bueckers. “It’s tears of happiness, you’re so extremely grateful that it even happened. But you’re obviously sad that it’s ending.”

After going 10 days without touching a basketball, Bueckers would have to ramp up her workouts in preparation for the WNBA campaign. “Paige is going to have to make the adjustment,” says Miller. “The speed of the game, the rules of the game, the physicality, is all different. The veterans aren’t going to take it easy on the rookie. Paige is going to feel her rookie moment at some point. She will have to navigate the comparisons to the adjustment that Caitlin had. We’re all mindful and aware, but we’re going to be very supportive that this is Paige’s journey, and no one else’s journey.”

Bueckers takes those comparisons in stride. “That’s what the media cares about,” she says. “That’s what everybody who watches basketball cares about. I used to be bothered by it. But I’ve done so much work on myself and my approach. The ability to not run a race in comparison, to run my own race and worry about that. Caitlin’s a phenomenal player. We’re also completely different players.” Pitting the two most recent No. 1 draft picks against each other, Bueckers admits, “is good for the game. At the end of the day, I don’t think either of us really cares about it, because we’re just trying to be the best versions of ourselves.”

She’s ready for the North Texas heat. “I want to give everything I have to the organization, to the city,” says Bueckers. “I know Dallas is a sports city. I’m walking in there wanting to be a great leader, a great teammate, wanting to be a winner at all levels, wearing that jersey and representing that city with pride and a passion and joy for the game of basketball. I want to give to that community. I want to be invested in it. We’re all looking to do something special.”

That will all come soon enough. For now, Bueckers, clad in a national-championship sweatshirt, just wants to eat a double cheeseburger with her friends, who are waiting at a nearby table. As the sun sets on her championship celebration, she’ll steal a few last moments. Then Buckets will go back to work.

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Celine Song's Journey From Matchmaking to Materialists

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.



A decade ago, before [Celine Song](#) scored [two Oscar nominations](#) for her debut film, *Past Lives*, she was a struggling playwright searching for odd jobs to make ends meet. She didn't have the latte-art skills to be a barista and couldn't land a steady babysitting gig without prior experience. But with a tip from a friend already in the industry, she secured a role as a [matchmaker](#) in Manhattan.

A naive creature might assume Song's meetings with clients seeking their soulmates involved conversations about hobbies, work-life balance, or procreation. In fact, the initial consultation was far more mathematical: They listed their requirements for height, income, age, and, yes, race. "All of the men would say 'fit.' What they meant was 20 BMI, just one level above underweight," Song remembers. "The women wanted someone who was 6' tall. My joke was, that person is going to be 5'7" by the time you're 90. And what is the goal of marriage if not to grow old together? All these numbers have nothing to do with that."

Song lasted just six months on the job, but she knew as soon as she left that she would write about the experience. "I learned more about people in those six months than I did in any other part of my life," she says. "I knew more than their therapists because they were willing to tell me their hearts' desires in a way that was so frank and objective."

Song's sophomore writing and directorial effort for the big screen, *Materialists* (June 13), centers on cynical matchmaker Lucy, played by [Dakota Johnson](#). She views her job as akin to a banker taking stock of her clients' value on the dating market. The gap between what they say they want—a lifelong companion—and their shallow checklists play as comic relief between scenes of Lucy's own search for love. Fans of [Past Lives](#), which announced Song as a major new talent, will find parallels. Both center on a woman torn between her past and future. In her autobiographical debut, [Greta Lee's stand-in for Song](#) is prompted to reminisce about her youth in Korea when a childhood crush visits; she struggles to reconcile that self with her new identity as a New York artist married to a white man. In *Materialists*, Lucy is torn between a broke but doting ex ([Chris Evans](#)) and a suave, rich man ([Pedro Pascal](#)), known in her business as a "unicorn."



But whereas *Past Lives* served up dreamily romantic visions of couples connecting on a spiritual level, *Materialists*, as its title promises, is steeped in questions of economic pragmatism. Fights over finances break up Lucy's relationship with Evans' struggling actor who understands her on a deep level. Lucy, like Scarlett O'Hara before her, vows she'll never be poor again. Her quickest path to financial solvency is marrying rich.

Lucy assesses her clients—and herself—using cold, unforgiving math that leaves little room for the magic of attraction. “In every aspect of our lives we talk about numbers. We talk about cars in this way, houses, jobs,” Song says during an April interview at the offices of [A24](#), which is releasing *Materialists*. The movie renders conversations about money and love as text, not subtext. While marriage was once more openly an economic proposition, “I don’t think it’s really gone away,” Song says. She wanted to show how we’ve evolved—or failed to evolve—in this respect and how our commodification of people continues to affect “something more spiritual and holy: love. I wanted to be honest about that.”

Classic British romances, in which the marriage contract is paramount to the plot, served as reference points for *Materialists*. [*Pride and Prejudice's*](#) Darcy, Song points out, is a dreamboat because he's not only the love of Elizabeth Bennet's life but also solves her family's financial woes. *Howard's End* is a novel more concerned with who inherits a particular house than with intimacy. The women in these stories are "always being asked to make decisions between complete practicality and the entirely romantic," says Song. "That dichotomy is where this movie lives."

As women entered the workforce in increasing numbers in the '70s and '80s, money took a backseat to chemistry as a driving force for romance in pop culture. We never worry about [*Harry or Sally*](#) being able to afford New York, and Bridget Jones' suitors are both conveniently wealthy. But Song observes that financial anxieties were still key. One of her favorite movies, Nora Ephron's *You've Got Mail*, derives tension from Tom Hanks' character, the owner of a Barnes & Noble-esque megastore, putting Meg Ryan's whimsical children's bookstore out of business. "That's a movie openly about gentrification," Song says. *Working Girl* dealt with class anxiety. So did [*Crazy Rich Asians*](#).

But the love interests in these movies are usually rich by happenstance. In fact, the heroine often objects to the man's wealth and only comes around after he proves his worth, in the Darcy mold. Plenty of other films—[*The Notebook*](#), [*Titanic*](#), [*The Princess Bride*](#)—hinge on the heroine choosing the poor man she loves over a rich one who's boring at best, loathsome at worst. In *Materialists*, money is the objective for many women. And for men, it's an essential tool to attract mates. Early in the film, Lucy and a colleague discuss a surgery in which doctors break a man's legs in multiple places so he can gain up to six inches in height. This very real procedure is painful, requires extensive rehab, and can cost over \$100,000. Lucy's world-weary assessment? It's well worth the price to expand a shorter bachelor's romantic prospects.



I admit to Song that I struggled with the character of Lucy, a modern woman asserting bluntly that she would only marry a rich man, especially when she seems capable of pursuing wealth in her own career. Admittedly, as a college dropout, Lucy could probably never afford the \$12 million Tribeca apartment that Pascal's character owns. And, I suppose, who am I to judge her in *this* economy?

Song gestures at my wedding ring and asks me how old I was when I met my husband. 23. She nods knowingly. Song, now 36, met her husband, *Challengers* and *Queer* screenwriter Justin Kuritzkes, when she was 24. They both won a fellowship from the Edward F. Albee Foundation and shared the barn in Montauk where that organization hosts its writers—a meet cute that would find its way into *Past Lives*.

“At the time, the practicality of it all was not on my mind. We were struggling writers happy to eat from the halal cart. Being a woman that age, you still think you can meet the love of your life on the street. By your 30s, it’s clear how much money everyone is making. You need certain things.

There's a hardening that happens," she says, offering her grand theory of dating. "If you ask your friends who are single now what they're looking for, they might start with height."

Song has spent a lot of time talking with people about their love lives. Those who hear she was a matchmaker want to ask her advice on finding a partner, while those who have seen her movies want to share their own love stories. "It's a privilege. The smartest people in the world start talking about romantic love, and it reduces them to sounding like idiots," she says. "You ask someone why they love their partner, they tell you it's because of some small thing they do, not because that person checked a box."

Song will keep writing about love because it's at once universal and mysterious. But she does worry for the genre: Studios often send romances straight to streaming despite the occasional breakout like last year's *Anyone But You* performing well at the box office. In one scene in *Materialists*, a male character dismisses dating as "not that serious." Lucy shoots back, "Just girl sh-t, right?"



“That is me being open about how this is serious sh-t. People call [romances](#) chick flicks,” says Song. “Of course it’s tied to misogyny. But when people say it’s not important, I ask, ‘Not as important as what?’ When you watch a movie, we don’t all know what it’s like to save the world. But we know what it’s like to fall in love. It’s the biggest drama in our lives. It’s vital, and we need to talk about it more.”

Materialists is also a [love triangle film](#) featuring a two-men-one woman entanglement much like *Past Lives*. Song rolls her eyes when I bring up the similarity. “I spent the entire *Past Lives* release talking about how it’s not a love triangle of that kind. It’s actually more of a love triangle between a person’s past, present, and future,” she says, laughing at her own exasperation. “And everyone’s talking about it like love triangles aren’t a fundamental part of every f-cking romance film. That’s the will-they-won’t-they. That’s the tension.”

It’s also the dream. Lucy’s dilemma, being wooed by two devastatingly handsome men, beats the hellish dating scene in which her clients are

rejected for facile reasons. The movie at times borders on cynicism, and working as matchmaker could make anyone jaded. But Song insists that she is, at heart, a romantic. “Is it worth it? Why can’t I just pursue somebody who is 6’ tall and makes a certain amount of money? Why should I look for this thing that feels elusive and has only ever caused me heartbreak?” she asks. “I know from my own experience that, yes, it is definitely worth it. I wish it wasn’t, because then we could just quit. But we can’t quit.”

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Are You Watching a Movie? Or Is it Just Content?

Zacharek is the film critic at TIME. She is the recipient of a Newswomen's Club of New York award and was a 2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist.



Whenever a friend or colleague sees a movie before I do, the first question I ask is no longer “Is it any good?” but “Does it feel like a real movie?”

Everyone knows exactly what the question means, even if none of us can quite articulate it. The rise of streaming has eroded not just the moviegoing experience but also the hard-to-define qualities that have traditionally made a movie a movie. I’ve stopped counting the number of times a friend or acquaintance has said to me, “There’s so much to stream these days—I’d rather just stay at home.”

But even if the theatrical experience sometimes appears to be dying, the movies are not. Young people and veteran filmmakers alike still want to make them. What is it that still draws them—and us—to the form? What makes some films feel real and others like sham products, worthy only of that derisive term *content*? This is all new territory. But it may help to look at some recent theatrical releases, as well as a few streaming-only products, to help discern what makes a film feel like a movie-movie today.

does a movie have to feel totally fresh? James Hawes' *The Amateur*, with Rami Malek as a low-key CIA employee intent on avenging his wife's death, is based on a 1981 Robert Littell thriller that has been adapted before. But it has a satisfying aura that seems to belong on the big screen. The action takes place in splashy locales like London and Paris, and the direction has a confident muscularity. We used to get sophisticated action-thrillers like this eight or nine times a year in the 1990s; now, a movie like *The Amateur*, watched on the big screen, can awaken a sense of something we've lost. It feels like a forgotten luxury.



But a work doesn't necessarily have to play on the big screen to feel like a movie-movie. Conviction on the part of the filmmaker or the actors, or both, may be the deciding factor—it's a “you know it when you see it” sort of

thing. Netflix has bankrolled some terrific films over the years, from [*Roma*](#) to [*Maestro*](#). But the Netflix Original *The Electric State*, a retro-futuristic fantasy directed by the Russo Brothers, released in mid-March via streaming only, achieves the dubious distinction of feeling slapdash and extravagant at once. Netflix spent some \$300 million on it, yet even with its designed-to-look-cool robot-centric special effects, it barely feels worthy of even the smallest screen. But that doesn't mean a direct-to-streaming entity can never feel like cinema. FX's series *Shogun* is an example of TV that offers the kind of visual splendor we usually have to go to the movies for. Even for diehard movie people, cinematic TV can step in when the movies fall down on the job.

Read more: [*The Best Movies to Watch on Netflix Right Now*](#)

What about movies that become surprise hits? Do they work because they're fun and well-made, or is the mechanism more mysterious than that?

Lawrence Lamont's bawdy buddy comedy [*One of Them Days*](#)—in which Keke Palmer and SZA play best friends who spend a crazy day trying to scrape together \$1500 in rent money—opened in January and stayed in theaters for more than two months before shifting to Netflix in early April. Audiences loved it. But the film also plays beautifully on the small screen—it's hilarious even when you're watching alone. Let's reverse-engineer that equation and consider Patricia Riggen's action-adventure [*G20*](#), from Amazon MGM Studios. Viola Davis plays the President of the United States, a war veteran who's forced to dust off her combat skills when crypto-terrorists invade the G20 Summit in South Africa. Though the movie got only a streaming release, beginning April 10, Amazon did play it for small, select audiences a few days earlier, which is how I saw it. I can't imagine enjoying this enthusiastically made but somewhat clumsy picture in my living room. But to watch Davis, a terrific actor who rarely gets the chance to let loose, crack a baddie over the head with a frying pan? The audience went nuts, and I did too. Sometimes the presence of other humans can turn a work into something greater than the sum of its parts.



Movie-movies don't have to be extravagant or expensive. Earlier this year, Steven Soderbergh released *Presence*, a subtle but intensely effective supernatural thriller that cost about \$2 million to make. Soderbergh's elegant, sophisticated spy caper *Black Bag*, released a few months later, cost quite a bit more (roughly \$50 million) and didn't make its money back at the box office—but that's no reflection on its quality. Now more than ever, the movie gods can be cruel.

And yet, even though the movie year is still young, we've already seen one example of a perfectly movielike movie. Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* fulfills every promise of what a great mainstream movie can be, and several weeks after its release, it has the box-office returns to prove it. *Sinners* is gorgeous to look at, and though it comes laced with serious ideas, about race and community, it's not hamstrung by them. It features both a big movie star, Michael B. Jordan, and an astonishing newcomer, Miles Caton, as a blues prodigy who's invited to dance with the devil. And it's about vampires—bloody, ruthless, charismatic vampires. There's music, there's steamy sex, there's gore served up in a way that's both artful and exhilarating. *Sinners* is

the kind of movie that sends you home thinking, OK, I just *saw* something. You saw what a filmmaker can do with a possibility, a camera, a cast and crew. But maybe even more important, you became part of the almost mystical bond that a filmmaker can forge with an audience. In the moviegoing equation, you're ingredient X. No movie is real without you.

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