

FIVE YEARS LATER AMERICA LOOKS FOR A WAY FORWARD AFTER GEORGE FLOYD

TIME



Holding On (Blue), 2025, by Tajh Rust

TIME Magazine

[May 12th, 2025]

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TIME Unveils Special Report: “Five Years Later: America Looks for a Way Forward After George Floyd”

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TIME.com

TIME to Host ‘*TIME Impact Dinner: The Road to Justice*’ in Washington, D.C. on May 20, in Partnership with the Center for Policing Equity

*May 1, 2025—*Today, TIME publishes “**Five Years Later: America Looks for a Way Forward After George Floyd**,” a special report released ahead of the fifth anniversary of George Floyd’s murder. In the wake of Floyd’s death, millions of Americans took to the streets, launching the largest protests in U.S. history and marking a watershed moment that demanded safety, dignity, and an end to anti-Black racism. Produced in collaboration with the **Center for Policing Equity**, the special package features a collection of interviews and essays from scholars, activists, artists, and more, exploring why the pursuit of racial justice remains so challenging in America.

—Read the special report: [here](#)

“Few periods have influenced the course of American history in the last century as the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the worldwide protest movement that sprung from it the following summer,” said TIME Editor in Chief **Sam Jacobs**. “We are grateful to partner with the Center for Policing Equity to publish work from artists, photographers and writers, each reflecting on the impact of this moment and the work that remains undone.”

The new cover for the project is a painting, *Holding On (Blue)*, by **Tajh Rust** for TIME. On the painting Rust writes: “I’ve been using this water motif to speak to a shared history and a collective memory across the Black diaspora. The water gives us a chance to reflect, but it can also be a flood. Our stories, challenges, and triumphs are connected by oceans. This family unit is inundated by the rising water, yet they stay above it. The hope may be found in the younger generation.”

—See the cover by painter Tajh Rust for TIME: [here](#)

The TIME Special Report “Five Years Later: America Looks for a Way Forward After George Floyd”

features perspectives from:

- Former basketball player **Carmelo Anthony** and former basketball player and social justice advocate **Maya Moore**: [How Sports Can](#)

Advance Racial Justice

- Scholar **Imani Perry**: [Art Is a Powerful Tool to Fight Racial Injustice](#)
- Civil rights advocate **Kimberle Crenshaw**: [The Battle for Our Memory Is the Battle for Our Country](#)
- Center for Policing Equity co-founder and CEO **Dr. Phillip Atiba Solomon**: [Building a Moonshot for Racial Justice](#)
- Philosopher and author **Olufemi O. Táiwò**: [Why Protests Should Be Promises](#)
- African American studies scholar **Brandon Terry**: [What the Reconstruction Era Can Teach Us About the Politics of Shame](#)
- Historian and professor **Dylan Penningroth**: [Police Power Affects All of Us](#)
- Activist and #MeToo movement founder **Tarana Burke**: [What Sustains Her Lifelong Fight for Racial Equity](#)
- A photo essay, featuring **Carrie Mae Weems**, **Mikael Owunna**, and other artists, on processing police brutality and spotlighting humanity in the era of Black Lives Matter: [The Artist as Witness in the Era of Black Lives Matter](#)

As an extension of the special project, TIME will host the **TIME Impact Dinner: The Road to Justice** with presenting partner the **Center for Policing Equity** in Washington, D.C. on May 20. The evening will be dedicated to elevating the perspectives of the leaders featured in the “Five Years Later: America Looks for a Way Forward After George Floyd” special report and those who are striving to reshape public safety systems to drive equity and better support marginalized communities.

###

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Pope Francis, the ‘World’s Parish Priest’ Who Led in an Era of Crisis, Dies at 88

Waxman is a staff writer at TIME in the Entertainment section. She also covers all things History.



Pope Francis, the reform-minded Roman Catholic leader who guided the church through an era of crisis, died Monday, April 21, a day after appearing at St. Peter’s Square to offer members of the public an Easter blessing. He was 88 years old.

“Dearest brothers and sisters, with deep sorrow I must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis,” Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Vatican camerlengo, said in [announcement](#). “At 7:35 this morning, the Bishop of Rome, Francis,

returned to the house of the Father. His entire life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and of His Church. He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage, and universal love, especially in favor of the poorest and most marginalized. With immense gratitude for his example as a true disciple of the Lord Jesus, we commend the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite merciful love of the One and Triune God.”

Francis' papacy marked a number of firsts: the first pope from the Americas; the first non-European pope; the first pope from the Southern Hemisphere; the first pope from the developing world; the first Pope to attend a G7 summit; [the first Pope to visit Iraq](#); the first Jesuit pope, and the first pope to take the name Francis after Saint Francis of Assisi, who was famous for his ministry to the poor.

His papacy also reflected a first in terms of his willingness to hear out different points of view on controversial issues including marriage, sexuality, the priesthood, and celibacy in the church that his predecessors weren't willing to debate. While none of the major church traditions were tossed out during his tenure, and at a time when the child sex abuse scandal that has plagued the church for years created a crisis of conscience particularly among young Catholics, Francis stood out for exuding a certain level of empathy, humility, and mercy that people felt connected to in a way they said they never felt with past popes. He served as the world's conscience. In 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine, he strongly urged President Vladimir Putin to “stop this spiral of violence and death” and avoid the “absurd” risk of nuclear war. During the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, he condemned the air strikes and called for peace, even keeping up his regular chats with [a Catholic parish in Gaza](#) while hospitalized for pneumonia. As TIME explained when it chose Pope Francis as its 2013 [“Person of the Year,”](#) he [“changed the tone and perception and focus](#) of one of the world's largest institutions in an extraordinary way.”

[Buy a copy of the Pope Francis cover here](#)

Early life

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina's capital city, the eldest of accountant Mario Bergoglio and Regina Sivori's five children. His parents were Italian immigrants who fled Benito Mussolini's fascist regime, and his grandmother Rosa Margherita Vassallo di Bergoglio was active in Catholic Action, formed by Italian bishops who wanted to maintain their independence from Mussolini's authoritarian rule. His grandmother had the biggest influence on him, according to biographer Austen Ivereigh, who wrote in *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church* that "it was an austere but happy lower middle-class family life." Grandma Bergoglio would take him to Mass, educated him about the saints and the rosary, and introduced him and his siblings to Italian literature and his favorite novel, Alessandro Manzoni's *The Betrothed*.

[video id=V0uEvr1Q autostart="viewable"]

His family retained their love for Italian culture, and Bergoglio grew up listening to opera and watching every Italian movie that came to town. His love for soccer dates back to this period, when he followed the small Buenos Aires soccer team San Lorenzo with his father.



Bergoglio first contemplated the priesthood as a preteen, writing to one girl he admired, Amalia Damonte, “If I don’t become a priest, I’ll marry you.” The epiphany came a few years later, at age 16. At 9 a.m. on Sept. 21, 1953, he was [en route](#) to meet classmates from the vocational school where he studied [chemistry](#) when he passed San José de Flores Church in Buenos Aires. He went into the confessional booth, and came out of it convinced that he should become a priest. “I felt I had to enter: It was one of those things one feels inside and one doesn’t know why,” he said in a 2012 Buenos Aires [radio interview](#). “I felt like someone grabbed me from inside and took me to the confessional,” [he also said](#). He ended up going home instead of going out with his friends because he felt “overwhelmed.”

Despite that realization, he later admitted he continued to contemplate his future before entering the seminary. “God left the door open for me for a few years,” he says in the 2010 compilation of interviews [Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio](#) by Francesca Ambrogetti and Sergio Rubin. “Religious vocation is a call from God to your heart, whether you are waiting for it consciously or unconsciously.”

On Dec. 13, 1969—four days before his 33rd birthday—he was ordained as a priest with the Society of Jesus, the largest religious order for Catholic men better known as the Jesuits. He continued his studies at University of Alcalá in Spain, and then returned to Argentina to a seminary in the city of San Miguel, where he [oversaw the new seminary students](#) and taught theology.

Before the Papacy

As pope, he was noted to have an openness to his decision-making that differed from his papal predecessors. His style can be traced back to moments when he made unpopular decisions in Argentina, which led to a personal evolution.

A few years into the priesthood, in 1973, he became the leader, or Provincial, of the Jesuits in Argentina at just 36 years old. Soon after, he was embroiled in a crisis that could have jeopardized his career amid one of the most tumultuous periods in Argentina's history.

During the so-called "[Dirty War](#)" from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s that took place in Argentina, two Jesuits serving in slums—Father Orlando Yorio and Father Francisco Jalics—were among those seen as rebels. After a military coup on March 24, 1976, overthrew the country's president and replaced it with a military dictatorship, Yorio and Jalics were kidnapped for five months and subjected to torture. Bergoglio was [accused of](#) not doing all he could [to protect them](#), though he testified in a court case that stemmed from the kidnapping that he did meet military officers privately and pressed for their release.



“My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative,” he said as he [reflected](#) on that period in an interview with the Jesuit and Catholic magazine *America* published in September 2013 after becoming pope.

His leadership style was further shaped while serving as rector of the Colegio de San José in Buenos Aires from 1980 to 1986. There, he had his students [work on farms](#)—harvesting crops and milking cows to feed the city’s poor—but he grew unpopular among those who emphasized more classroom time. He was eventually forced out of the role, and relocated to Córdoba in 1990, where the 53-year-old spent two years living in a [tiny room](#) in a Jesuit residence, essentially [in exile](#). It was “a time of great interior crisis,” he [said](#).

In June 1992, Pope John Paul II named Bergoglio auxiliary bishop in Buenos Aires, on the recommendation of the city’s archbishop Antonio Quarracino, to whom he had grown close. He succeeded Quarracino upon his death in 1998, became a cardinal in 2001 and president of the Argentine

bishops conference in 2005. He was Buenos Aires archbishop until Pope Benedict XVI resigned.

Setting a new tone as Pope

On Feb. 11, 2013, Pope Benedict XVI became the first pope to announce his resignation in about 600 years, since Gregory XII in 1415. The College of Cardinals elected Bergoglio on March 13th on the fifth ballot in [one of the fastest papal conclaves](#).

“Clearly the Cardinals were looking for something and *someone* different, and so his very otherness may have been appealing,” James Martin, the Jesuit priest and editor-at-large at *America*, [wrote](#) for TIME.com two days after Bergoglio was elected pope. “Particularly in light of the [Vatileak scandals](#), the Cardinals may have been searching for someone who could take a fresh look at things and move the bureaucracy in a new direction. On the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica, as he addressed the crowd, Pope Francis joked about his Latin American origins. It seemed, he said, that the Cardinals had to go to the ‘ends of the earth’ to find a Pope. But often someone from the margins is just what the center needs.”





Initially there was concern about whether he could breathe new life into the church if he was missing a lung—the Vatican clarified that [part of his lung was removed](#) after a bout of severe pneumonia when he was a 21 year old seminary student—but Francis hit the ground running. His actions in his first year made clear that business as usual was not going to be sufficient. For example, within his first year as Pontiff, a commission to investigate the Vatican bank was created. The commission conducted an audit, which led to the bank’s first financial report in 125 years.

He was also seen as more openminded—less doctrinaire—on pressing lifestyle questions among churchgoers. While Pope Benedict described homosexuality in 2005 as “an objective disorder” and “a strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil,” Francis made headlines in 2013 for saying, “If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?” In December 2023, Pope Francis [approved](#) a new rule

allowing priests to bless same-sex couples, though that didn't mean the Vatican approved of same-sex marriage. Throughout his papacy he maintained that gay marriage is not marriage. In his first major document on family issues, the 2016 *Amoris Laetitia*, he stated that "de facto or same-sex unions, for example, may not simply be equated with marriage."

In a move toward reform, the document also represented a milestone for encouraging church communities to be more welcoming of divorced people. He also loosened red tape in the process for couples seeking annulments. Though the document maintained that divorced Catholics who remarry without an annulment aren't supposed to receive communion at Mass, he reiterated in a footnote a line he has said in the past, that "the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." He also wrote that "No one can be condemned forever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel! Here I am not speaking only of the divorced and remarried, but of everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves."

He also aimed to more fully acknowledge women in the church, hailing "unknown and forgotten" mothers and grandmothers and the "genius" of female saints. In January 2019, he appointed the first woman to hold a senior managerial position in the Vatican's Secretariat of State office by naming layperson Francesca di Giovanni to be a point-person for diplomatic relations. His 2018 Apostolic Exhortation (meaning a statement issued by a pope) "Gaudete et Exsultate" ("Rejoice and Be Glad"), featured women in a way that some papal watchers found progressive—such as by acknowledging that "unknown or forgotten women ... sustained and transformed families and communities"—but he took them down a peg by also writing, "Their lives may not always have been perfect, yet even amid their faults and failings they kept moving forward and proved pleasing to the Lord."



Thus, Jamie L. Manson, a self-described queer Catholic pundit at [National Catholic Reporter](#), argued the pope was merely “reasserting … his belief that women’s most essential vocation, and her true path to holiness, comes in motherhood and nurturing her family.”

He was also firm that priests are supposed to be men. He expressed some openness to female deacons—and in August 2016 created [a commission](#) to explore that option—but [a couple of months later](#) he maintained, “On the ordination of women in the Catholic Church, the last word is clear.” He was also tentatively open to the idea of allowing married men to become priests in areas where they’re desperately needed, and in October 2019 a meeting of bishops convened by Pope Francis [endorsed](#) this exact idea in the Amazon region. But the pope tabled that proposal in a letter [revealed](#) in February 2020.

The next month, Pope Francis found himself leading a global church during a global pandemic. On Mar. 27, 2020—with the Vatican in lockdown, and church services livestreaming worldwide—the Pontiff delivered a special blessing to an empty, rain-covered St. Peter’s Square, urging Catholics feeling “afraid and lost” to maintain their faith.

Addressing the sex abuse crisis

The child sex abuse scandals have been a black eye on the Catholic Church over the past two decades, and the issue was far from resolved during Pope Francis’s tenure. He faced accusations that he didn’t do enough or was still part of an antiquated system that protected accused priests at the expense of victims.

About a year into his papacy, he [claimed](#) that “no-one else has done more” than the church in cracking down on pedophiles in the clergy, hailing its “transparency.” During his first meeting with the people who had been sexually abused by priests in July 2014, he characterized those clerics as a [“sacrilegious cult.”](#)

As bombshell revelations about victims continued, it became clear that the pope’s “legacy is at stake” with his approach to the sex abuse scandal “and the viability of the Catholic Church itself,” as Christopher J. Hale, who helped run Catholic outreach for President Barack Obama [put it](#) in a Feb. 2018 op-ed for TIME.



Hale's op-ed came on the heels of the pope's first visit to Chile the month prior, when he [came under fire](#) for standing by Juan Barros, the Chilean bishop he appointed to head the diocese of Osorno, Chile; Barros was accused of covering up for his mentor Rev. Fernando Karadima, who, in 2011, was found guilty of sexually abusing minors in Chile and sentenced to a [“life of prayer and penitence](#). Francis said he was “convinced” of Barros’ innocence in this matter and called the accusations that Barros covered up for Karadima “calumny” and said “there is not a single proof against him.” He called for a Vatican investigation. After listening to dozen of testimonies, he publicly [apologized](#) in April for “serious mistakes” in reading the situation. “I was part of the problem,” Pope Francis [reportedly told](#) Chilean victims of sexual abuse who visited the Pope at the Vatican in May 2018. Barros [resigned](#) the next month.

He did take decisive actions on the issue over the next year. He [made history](#) in February 2019 by de-frocking Theodore McCarrick, an ex-cardinal accused of sexual abuse. It appeared to mark the first time a cardinal has been expelled over such allegations, and the first time an American cardinal

has been banned from the priesthood. To enable clergy to report sex abuse claims to law enforcement, he also nixed a 2001 decree that had allowed church officials to classify sex abuse allegations as “[pontifical secrets](#)”—the most secretive of church doings.

Championing climate change

Living up to Francis of Assisi’s recognition as the [patron saint of ecology and the poor](#), the pope released a groundbreaking June 2015 climate encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home*, arguing climate change was undeniable and disproportionately impacting developing countries. It came ahead of the Paris climate accords. Addressing a community of the faithful [divided](#) on whether humans caused climate change or whether climate change is a serious problem, the 184-page document said humans feel “entitled to plunder her [the Earth] at will” and described climate change as “one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day” and “a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods.”

Top economist and sustainable development expert Jeffrey Sachs described it as playing a “huge role” in getting predominantly Catholic nations onboard with the Paris Agreement, [according to Ivereigh](#).

The ‘world’s parish priest’

His modest lifestyle was also part of his appeal. Dating back to taking public transportation as archbishop in Buenos Aires and opting for apartment living, as pope he chose to live in a penthouse apartment in Saint Martha’s house, adjacent to Saint Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City, because he thought the Apostolic Palace was too extravagant. He was nicknamed the “world’s parish priest” for his modesty, and he demonstrated it with acts including washing the feet of a [dozen local inmates](#) in the [walk-up to Easter](#)—noting that bishops must be servants. On [Sep. 4, 2016](#), he proclaimed Mother Teresa, famous for serving the poor in Calcutta, India, a saint.



Just as Saint Francis of Assisi traveled to Egypt to try and stop the Crusades, Pope Francis traveled to the region to promote tolerance between Christians and Muslims. In February 2019, he became the first pope to visit an Arab Gulf state by going to the United Arab Emirates and leading what is believed to be the [largest act of Christian public worship on the Arabian peninsula](#). He and Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar and the equivalent of the Pope to Sunni worshipers, co-signed a landmark “The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in an effort to set a new tone for peaceful relations between Islam and Christianity, the world’s biggest religions, at a time when the migrant crisis exacerbated anti-Muslim sentiment that escalated after the September 11th terror attacks.

Pope Francis also tried to repair the church’s relations with indigenous groups. In July 2022, he embarked on a week-long “pilgrimage of penance” in Canada, publicly apologizing for residential boardings schools run by church missionaries, notorious for decades of physical and emotional abuse. “I’m here to remember the past, and to cry with you,” he [told](#) an audience of indigenous Canadians and survivors, before receiving a high honor usually reserved for indigenous chiefs.

Pope Francis sets Instagram record—and becomes ‘cool’

He embraced [social media](#) to reach worshippers worldwide. He was the first Pope to host a Google Hangout and when he joined Instagram in 2016, he [set a record](#) for most followers gained in a single day after racking up over 1.4 million followers in less than 12 hours. His presence on social media earned him a reputation as a “[cool](#)” pope. “People will approach me to say, ‘I’ve been away from the Church for a year but Pope Francis is drawing me back,’ or ‘I’m not a Catholic, but I sure love this pope,’ ” as Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, put it in a 2018 [interview](#). “He’s helping people take a fresh look at the Catholic Church.” At the same time, he recognized that social media theoretically makes it easier to put a message out to worshippers—even as he fretted about shorter attention spans. “The technological and cultural shifts that have marked this period of history have made the transmission of faith increasingly difficult,” he says in Ivereigh’s book.



In October 2019—six years after becoming pope and at age 82—he took steps [seen as shoring up his legacy](#): appointing 13 new cardinals on a similar wavelength in terms of policy priorities, and hailing from diverse countries like Morocco, Indonesia, Guatemala and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He even talked openly about [dying](#). On a 2014 flight from South Korea to the Vatican, in response to a question about how he feels about global fame, he [told](#) reporters, “I try to think of my sins, my mistakes, not to become proud. Because I know it will last only a short time. Two or three years and then I’ll be off to the Father’s house.” Of course, he lived longer, but in a [video message](#) to a gathering of youth in Mexico City in October 2019, he talked about a more timeless philosophy of death as a reality check and making the most of what you do while alive: “It is death that allows life to remain alive! … It is a slap in the face to our illusion of omnipotence.”

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The Return of the Dire Wolf

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



Romulus and Remus are doing what puppies do: chasing, tussling, nipping, nuzzling. But there's something very un-puppylike about the snowy white 6-month olds—their size, for starters. At their young age they already measure nearly 4 ft. long, tip the scales at 80 lb., and could grow to 6 ft. and 150 lb. Then there's their behavior: the angelic exuberance puppies exhibit in the presence of humans—trotting up for hugs, belly rubs, kisses—is completely absent. They keep their distance, retreating if a person approaches. Even one of the handlers who raised them from birth can get only so close before Romulus and Remus flinch and retreat. This isn't domestic canine behavior,

this is wild lupine behavior: the pups are wolves. Not only that, they're dire wolves—which means they have cause to be lonely.

The dire wolf once roamed an American range that extended as far south as Venezuela and as far north as Canada, but not a single one has been seen in over 10,000 years, when the species went extinct. Plenty of dire wolf remains have been discovered across the Americas, however, and that presented an opportunity for a company named [Colossal Biosciences](#).

MAY 12, 2025

TIME

Extinct

This is Remus. He's a dire wolf.
The first to exist in over 10,000 years.
Endangered species could
be changed forever

by
JEFFREY KLUGER



time.com

[Buy a copy of the Dire Wolf issue here](#)

Relying on deft genetic engineering and ancient, preserved DNA, [Colossal scientists deciphered the dire wolf genome](#), rewrote the genetic code of the common gray wolf to match it, and, using domestic dogs as surrogate mothers, brought Romulus, Remus, and their sister, 2-month-old Khaleesi, into the world during three separate births last fall and this winter—effectively for the first time de-extincting a line of beasts whose live gene pool long ago vanished. TIME met the males (Khaleesi was not present due to her young age) at a fenced field in a U.S. wildlife facility on March 24, on the condition that their location remain a secret to protect the animals from prying eyes.

The dire wolf isn't the only animal that Colossal, [which was founded in 2021](#) and [currently employs](#) 130 scientists, wants to bring back. Also on their de-extinction wish list is the woolly mammoth, the dodo, and the [thylacine](#), or Tasmanian tiger. Already, in March, the company surprised the science community with the news that it had copied mammoth DNA to create a [woolly mouse](#), a chimeric critter with the long, golden coat and the accelerated fat metabolism of the mammoth.

If all this seems to smack of P.T. Barnum, the company has a reply. Colossal claims that the same techniques it uses to summon back species from the dead could prevent existing but endangered animals from slipping into extinction themselves. What they learn restoring the mammoth, they say, could help them engineer more robust elephants that can better survive the climatic ravages of a warming world. Bring back the thylacine and you might help preserve the related marsupial known as the [quoll](#). Techniques learned restoring the dire wolf can similarly be used to support the endangered red wolf.

"We are an evolutionary force at this point," says Beth Shapiro, Colossal's chief science officer, speaking of humanity as a whole. "We are deciding what the future of these species will be." [The Center for Biological Diversity](#) suggests that 30% of the planet's genetic diversity will be lost by 2050, and Shapiro and Colossal CEO Ben Lamm insist that genetic engineering is a vital tool to reverse this. Company executives often frame the technology not just as a moral good, but a moral imperative—a way for humans, who have

driven so many species to the brink of extinction, to get square with nature. “If we want a future that is both bionumerous and filled with people,” Shapiro says, “we should be giving ourselves the opportunity to see what our big brains can do to reverse some of the bad things that we’ve done to the world already.”

[video id=bs34qQnK autostart="viewable"]

The woolly mouse, to a minor extent, and the dire wolves, to a [scientifically seismic one](#), are first steps in that direction. But not everyone agrees. Scientific history is rife with examples of newly introduced species becoming invasive species—the doctrine of unintended consequences biting humans when we played too cute with other animals. An exotic pet escapes and multiplies, decimating native species. A toad brought in to kill off beetles ends up killing off the marsupials that eat the toads. And genetic engineering is still a nascent field. Nearly 30 years after [Dolly the sheep](#) was cloned, the technology [still produces problems in cloned animals](#), such as large birth size, organ defects, premature aging, and immune-system problems. What’s more, cloning can be hard on the surrogate mother that gestates the cloned embryo.

“There’s a risk of death. There’s a risk of side effects that are severe,” says Robert Klitzman, professor of psychiatry and director of the bioethics master’s program at Columbia University. “There’s a lot of suffering involved in that. There are going to be miscarriages.”

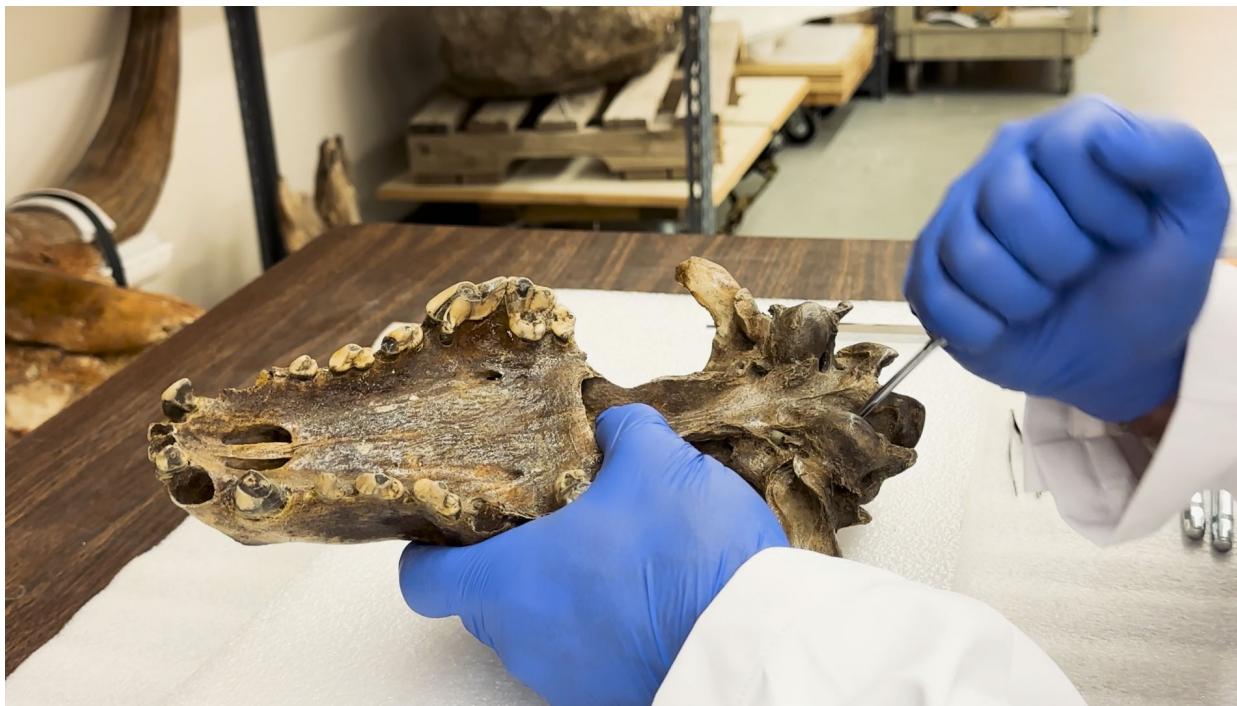
Still, Colossal’s scientists believe they are on to something powerful. Matt James, the company’s chief animal officer—who once worked as senior director of animal care at the Dallas Zoo and Zoo Miami, where he managed the welfare of 7,000 animals representing 500 species—felt the significance of the science when Romulus and Remus were just 5 or 6 weeks old. The staff was weighing the little pups, and one of the veterinary techs began singing a song from *The Little Mermaid*. When she reached a point at which she vocalized first up, then down, Romulus and Remus turned her way and began howling in response.

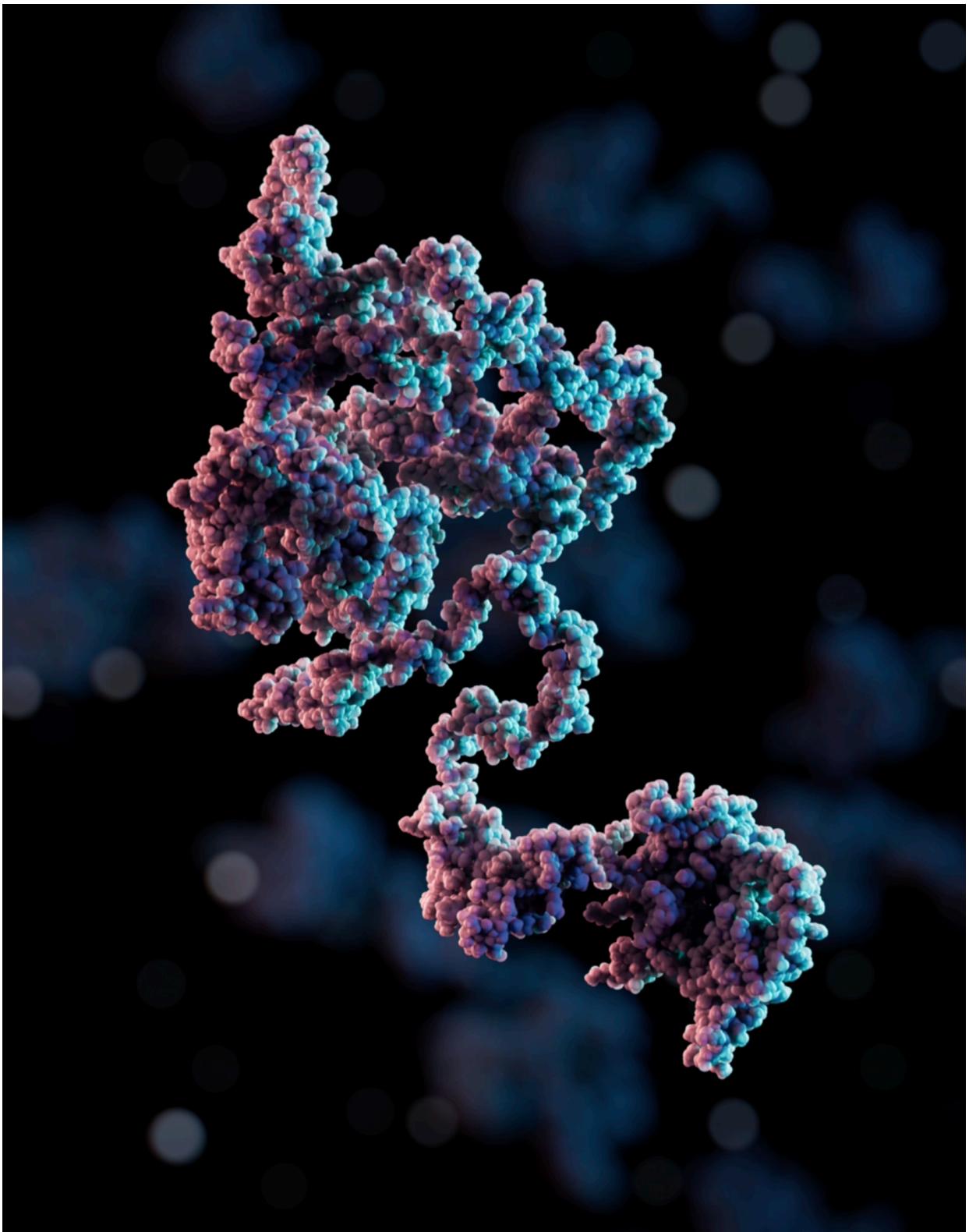
“For me,” James says, “it was sort of a shocking, chilling moment.” These pups were the first to produce a howl that hadn’t been heard on earth in over

10,000 years.

It takes surprisingly few genetic changes to spell the difference between a living species and an extinct one. Like other canids, a wolf has about [19,000 genes](#). (Humans and mice have [about 30,000](#).) Creating the dire wolves called for making just 20 edits in 14 genes in the common gray wolf, but those tweaks gave rise to a host of differences, including Romulus' and Remus' white coat, larger size, more powerful shoulders, wider head, larger teeth and jaws, more-muscular legs, and characteristic vocalizations, especially howling and whining.

The dire wolf genome analyzed to determine what those changes were was extracted from two ancient samples—one a 13,000-year-old tooth found in Sheridan Pit, Ohio, the other a 72,000-year-old ear bone unearthed in American Falls, Idaho. The samples were lent by the museums that house them. The lab work that happened next was painstaking.





Cloning typically requires snipping a tissue sample from a donor animal and then isolating a single cell. The nucleus of that cell—which contains all of

the animal's DNA—is then extracted and inserted into an ovum whose own nucleus has been removed. That ovum is allowed to develop into an embryo and then implanted in a surrogate mother's womb. The baby that results from that is an exact genetic duplicate of the original donor animal. This is the way the first cloned animal, Dolly, was created in 1996. Since then, pigs, cats, deer, horses, mice, goats, gray wolves, and more than 1,500 dogs have been cloned using the same technology.

Colossal's dire wolf work took a less invasive approach, isolating cells not from a tissue sample of a donor gray wolf, but from its blood. The cells they selected are known as endothelial progenitor cells (EPCs), which form the lining of blood vessels. The scientists then rewrote the 14 key genes in the cell's nucleus to match those of the dire wolf; no ancient dire wolf DNA was actually spliced into the gray wolf's genome. The edited nucleus was then transferred into a denucleated ovum. The scientists produced 45 engineered ova, which were allowed to develop into embryos in the lab. Those embryos were inserted into the wombs of two surrogate hound mixes, chosen mostly for their overall health and, not insignificantly, their size, since they'd be giving birth to large pups. In each mother, one embryo took hold and proceeded to a full-term pregnancy. (No dogs experienced a miscarriage or stillbirth.) On Oct. 1, 2024, the surrogates birthed Romulus and Remus. A few months later, Colossal repeated the procedure with another clutch of embryos and another surrogate mother. On Jan. 30, 2025, that dog gave birth to Khaleesi.

Read more: [The Science Behind the Return of the Dire Wolf](#)

During their pregnancies, the mama hounds were kept at Colossal's animal-care facility, where they were regularly monitored and given weekly ultrasounds by staff scientists and veterinarians. All three wolves were born by planned cesarean section to minimize the risk of birthing complications. A four-person team performed the surgery and lifted out the pups; four more attendants cleaned and swaddled the newborns while the surgical team looked after the mother as she emerged from anesthesia.

"We elected to put both pups with the surrogate who was displaying the best maternal instincts," says James. "That reintroduction occurred just about two

or so hours after birth, and she immediately began caring for them and allowing them to nurse.”

The pups fed from the surrogate for just a few days, after which the Colossal team removed them and bottle-fed them because the surrogate was actually becoming too attentive—disrupting the pups’ regular sleeping and feeding schedules. They were weaned at eight weeks and have been living the lives of healthy young dire wolves since then.

“The idea that we could just take a vial of blood, isolate EPCs, culture them, and clone from them, and they have a pretty high cloning efficiency, we think it’s a game changer,” says George Church, Colossal co-founder, and professor of genetics at both Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The less invasive cell-sampling process will make the procedure easier on animals, and the fact that Colossal’s methods worked on this early go-round boosts company confidence that they are on track for much broader de-extinction and rewilding.

Since their births, the dire wolves have lived on a 2,000-acre ecological preserve at a location in the U.S. that Colossal also keeps secret to protect the animals; the grounds are much larger than the relatively small enclosure TIME visited. The 2,000 acres are surrounded by a 10-ft. fence and include a smaller six-acre site with a veterinary clinic, an extreme-weather shelter, and natural dens where the wolves can satisfy their innate desire for a secure retreat. A staff of veterinarians looks out for the animals around the clock.

The wolves are fed a diet of beef, horse, and deer meat as well as liver and other offal, along with puppy chow to provide vital nutrients. When they were just weaned, the meat was served pureed, which is similar to the partially digested meat a mother will regurgitate to feed her young. Now the food is presented whole so the wolves can tear it apart as they would if they had hunted it down. So far they have not actually killed any small, live prey that may have ventured into their enclosure.

“We have not seen them attempt to hunt any live prey, and we do not provide live prey,” says Paige McNickle, Colossal’s manager of animal husbandry. “But if I were a deer I would stay away from their preserve.”

“I think they are the luckiest animals ever,” says Shapiro. “They will live their entire life on this protected ecological reserve, where they have all sorts of space. These animals were hand reared. They’re not capable of living in the wild, and we want to study them for their lives and understand how these edits might have modified things that we can’t predict. They’re not going to be able to get a splinter without us finding out.” So far nothing worrisome or unexpected has turned up in the wolves.

The effort to produce a woolly mammoth is on something of a tight schedule. The woolly mice gestated fast, popping out into the world after a pregnancy of [20 days](#). The wolf pups [took just 65 days](#) to bake. Asian elephants—the extinct woolly mammoth’s closest surviving kin—[require 22 months](#), the longest gestation period of any mammal.

And this genetic transformation will involve even more than the one that created the wolves. “We were originally talking about editing about 65 genes,” says Lamm. “We’re now talking about 85 different genes, and some of those will have multiple [functions] like cold tolerance—which includes additional subcutaneous fat layers and their shaggy coat.” As with the dire wolves, no ancient mammoth DNA will be spliced into the elephant’s genome; the elephant genes will simply be rewritten to match the mammoth’s. The company says it has so far edited 25 of those genes, and is “on track for our embryos to be ready for implantation by the end of 2026,” to meet its goal of a calf being born in 2028.

No matter how the resulting woolly baby might look, Colossal admits that in some respects it will be a mammoth in name only. “They’re elephant surrogates that have some mammoth DNA to make them re-create core characteristics belonging to mammoths,” says Shapiro.

But that might be a distinction without a difference. If it looks like a mammoth and behaves like a mammoth and, if given the opportunity to breed with another engineered elephant with mammoth-mimicking DNA, produces a baby mammoth, it’s hard to say that the species hasn’t been brought back from the dead. “Our mammoths and dire wolves are mammoths and dire wolves by that definition,” says Shapiro. “They have the key traits that make that lineage of organisms distinct.”

The question then becomes what to do with the mammoth you've made once it's at large in the world—a question that bedevils all of Colossal's work. Shapiro might not be wrong when she says Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi are lucky wolves, at least in terms of the round-the-clock care, feeding, and love they will receive throughout their lives, but those lives will also be limited.





Wolf packs can, on occasion, be as small as two members, but typically [include 15 or more](#). What's more, the animals' hunting territory can range anywhere from [50 to 1,000 sq. mi.](#) Against that, Colossal's three dire wolves spending their entire lives in a 2,000-acre preserve could be awfully lonely and claustrophobic—not at all the way wild dire wolves would live their lives.

Already, Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi are exhibiting behaviors that would serve them well in the wild but do little for them in semicaptivity. They began howling when they were just 2 weeks old, and early on began stalking —hunting leaves or anything that moved. They also exhibited wolflike caution, running to hide in dark places if they were surprised or alarmed.

“From day one they have always behaved like wolves and have rarely shown doglike behavior,” says McNickle. So far, the wolves have never menaced any humans, but a risk does exist. Colossal is thus being careful. “Our

protocols ensure that people are never in a situation where the wolves might be frightened or become aggressive toward their caretakers,” she says.

Whether later dire wolves Colossal might create can ever live beyond the preserve is open to question. Rick McIntyre, a retired wolf researcher with the U.S. National Park Service and a Colossal adviser, warns that dire wolves vanished in the first place because they were specialized hunters, preying on huge animals like the mammoth and the 3,500-lb. [Ice Age bison](#). When those beasts died out, so did dire wolves.

“My guess is that they specialized in dealing with the very large megafauna of the Ice Age, whereas I would say that gray wolves are a bit more of a generalist,” says McIntyre. “We see gray wolves catch voles, ground squirrels, marmots, all the way up to the 2,000-lb. bull bison. A general principle in wildlife is that it’s good to be flexible. The more that you specialize, that can hurt you in the long run.”

The mammoth creates even greater challenges. Elephants are exceedingly intelligent, exceedingly social creatures, gathering in [herds of up to 25 individuals](#). Sometimes, those groups combine in much larger clans of up to 1,000 animals around a vital resource like a watering hole. In the wild, the animals will travel up to 40 miles a day in search of food and water—and that’s only average. Sometimes their daily wanderings may cover 125 miles. No one knows if mammoths would exhibit the same social and exploratory needs, but if they do, confining one or even a few individuals to an enclosure like the dire wolves’ would amount to a sort of near-solitary confinement.

“I really feel that bringing back one or even five woolly mammoths is not a good idea,” says Stephen Latham, director of the Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics at Yale University. “A single woolly mammoth is not a woolly mammoth leading a woolly mammoth life with a woolly mammoth herd.”

Just as important as Colossal’s mission to restore extinct species is its efforts to stop endangered ones from winking out entirely. At the same time the company’s scientists are bringing back the dire wolf, for example, they are attempting to save the red wolf. Once common across the U.S. Southeast, red wolves began dying out because of habitat loss and predator-control programs that targeted the animal for elimination. In the 1960s, the U.S. Fish

and Wildlife Service introduced a captive-breeding program to save the species and preserve [the role it plays in the larger ecosystem](#): keeping populations of deer in check, which prevents them from overgrazing, as well as controlling populations of smaller prey like raccoons and opossums, which menace native birds. Ultimately, the program produced 250 individuals, released mainly in North Carolina, but today fewer than 20 survive, most of the others having been claimed by poaching and car strikes.

Colossal aims to turn that around. Along with its news about the dire wolves, the company also announced that it had cloned four red wolves—a small but important step in fortifying the species as a whole. With so few individuals remaining, the species suffers from what is known as a “genetic bottleneck,” a lack of diversity in the genome that can lead to infertility and inherited birth defects. What is needed is a way to refresh the gene line with new DNA, and science may have a way.

In the days before advanced genomics, conservationists identified all species—including the red wolf—principally by their phenotype, or appearance. Plenty of wolves that did not fit the right size or color for the red wolf might have been carrying what researchers refer to as “ghost alleles”—or red wolf gene variations that did not show up in the wolves’ color, size, or shape. Recently, Bridgett vonHoldt, a Colossal scientific adviser and an associate professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Princeton University, and Kristin Brzeski, an associate professor of wildlife science and conservation at Michigan Tech, discovered populations of canids along the coasts of Louisiana and Texas whose DNA included both coyote genes and red wolf ghost alleles. The four red wolves the Colossal scientists created used that natural genetic reservoir to produce what they call the first Ghost Wolf, with an eye to eventually fortifying the red wolf species with more such young carrying a variety of genes.

Read more: [The Science Behind the Return of the Dire Wolf](#)

The cloned red wolves now live in a separate fenced area within the same 2,000-acre preserve as the dire wolves. Like Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, they will spend their lives there and not be rewilded. But later red wolves might be, as Colossal learns more about the clones’ health and fitness. The company says it’s in advanced discussions with the state of North Carolina

about “conservation tools that can be used to help rescue the red wolf and accelerate its recovery.”

“It’s the lost genetics of the world’s most endangered wolf,” says James. “And we now have the opportunity to use our cloning and genetic-engineering tools to be able to confer that genetic diversity back into the recovery of the species.”

Similar science might work to save the northern quoll, a small, carnivorous marsupial native to Australia. Quolls are threatened by the cane toad, [which was introduced to Australia](#) in 1935 in an attempt to control beetle pests that were devouring sugarcane roots. The experiment failed, with the toads showing no particular appetite for the target insects, all the while doing a fine job of feasting on other insect prey, and becoming an invasive species themselves. Quolls, in turn, prey on the toads—but often lose their lives in the process because of a toxin that the toads carry on their skin, pushing the little marsupial to the edge of extinction. Through their work trying to bring back the extinct thylacine, or Tasmanian tiger, one member of the marsupial family that includes the quoll, Colossal scientists have identified a single change in a single nucleotide—a basic building block of DNA and RNA—that could confer a 5,000-fold resistance to the cane toad neurotoxin.

“We as humanity introduced this cane toad species. We as humanity are now inadvertently killing off the quoll as well as other marsupials,” says Lamm. “This one change can make these super quolls that can love eating cane toads. Those are the types of wins that we can get using these genetic technologies.”



So far, Colossal has mostly successes on its tote board. No animals have yet been rewilded, but though the woolly mouse and dire wolves are the first edited animals that have come from the labs, both represent progress. Still, scientists not affiliated with the company stress that genetic engineering is head-crackingly complex, and all manner of unintended downstream consequences can occur when you start mucking around in the engine room of the cells.

“There’s a phenomenon called pleiotropy in which one gene has an effect on more than one trait,” says Alison van Eenennaam, professor of animal biotechnology and genetics at the University of California, Davis. “That’s true for many, many, many genes. There could be some genes they’re targeting for specific traits that have effects that are not compatible with survival.”

Even if Colossal gets the gene editing right, the business of gestating the desired young could present other obstacles. Cloning of livestock still results

in more misses than hits. “You get high rates of perinatal and pregnancy loss,” says van Eenennaam.

Then, too, there’s always the possibility that a precious handful of de-extincted animals could run riot in the modern world. The cane toad’s transition from pest eater to invasive species is a reminder of how quickly human intrusion into wild processes can spin out of control. Bioethicist Latham points to mosquito control as one more concerning example.

“There are a number of efforts to genetically modify mosquitoes so that they will have mass die-outs or so that they won’t be able to carry particular diseases like dengue or malaria,” he says. “I worry about our losing control of some of those efforts, because mosquitoes—even though they carry diseases that are bad for people—occupy a niche in ecology, in that they’re eaten by certain kinds of birds.”

There’s precedent for this kind of genetic hegemony beyond the cane toad. [Asian carp](#), introduced into the U.S. in the 1970s by the aquaculture industry, are overwhelming the Great Lakes, crowding out other species. [Burmese pythons](#), imported to the U.S. as exotic pets, have established a similar invasive niche in the Everglades, released there by owners who tired of caring for them.

Colossal scientists are pressing ahead nonetheless, and the company is already thriving in an adaptive niche of its own—not just as a scientific enterprise, but as a formidable business. It has reached decacorn status, currently valued at \$10.2 billion, and while it may not be easy to monetize a mammoth or a dodo or a dire wolf pup, Lamm sees plenty of commercial potential in the technologies his scientific team is developing. Colossal has spun off two new companies so far. One, called [Breaking](#), uses engineered microbes and enzymes to break down plastic waste. The other, [Form Bio](#), provides AI and computational biology platforms for drug development. And none of that touches Colossal’s core expertise in cellular and genetic engineering, which has uncounted applications in the biomed domain, including treating and preventing diseases. “Those genome-engineering technologies alone are worth tens of billions of dollars,” says Lamm.

Colossal does not have the field to itself—even if it is currently the most conspicuous player. [Revive & Restore](#), a California-based conservation organization, provides funding for projects worldwide involving [de-extinction](#), [increasing biodiversity](#), and [saving endangered species](#). Another group, [Rewilding Europe](#), is providing support to scientists working to preserve and restore species across the European continent, including the bearded vulture, the Iberian lynx, the marbled polecat, the imperial eagle, and the [auroch](#)—the extinct ancestor of domestic cattle. But they are small compared with Colossal. In 2024, Rewilding Europe disbursed 20 million euros to support rewilding efforts across Europe. Revive & Restore, founded in 2012, has [so far raised \\$40 million](#) to support similar conservation efforts. Lamm sees both groups as partners rather than competitors in the shared goal of conservation.

Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi, of course, are going about their young lives unaware of the groundbreaking science behind their births and the promise they represent. During TIME’s visit, Romulus and Remus gamboled about their enclosure, gnawing on bark they had found on the ground while keeping a discreet distance from the gawking humans.

“They have different personalities,” says McNickle. “Romulus was a very brave pup and the first to go exploring on his own even when he was just a few days old. Remus was much more reserved and would follow Romulus’ cues. As they are growing up, Remus has become the more confident of the two and the first to explore new things and new areas.”

Whether the existing dire wolves or others Colossal might produce will be allowed to mate and spawn a next generation of wolves naturally is not yet known. Handlers can monitor the female estrous cycles and separate the animals at key times or employ contraceptive implants that keep the wolves from producing young until it is determined whether they have any abnormalities that could be passed on. [The MHA Nation](#) tribes (Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara) have expressed a desire to have dire wolves live on their lands in North Dakota, a possibility Colossal is studying.

If the company succeeds in its mission to save existing animals from extinction and restore ones that walked the world well before the rise of the humans, Romulus, Remus, and Khaleesi will be long remembered. One

species, our own, is increasingly crowding out the millions of others that call the planet home, and Colossal is working to claim the power to reverse that —at least a little.

“I think of that famous Teddy Roosevelt quote,” says James, paraphrasing the 26th President. “In the moment of any choice, the first thing to do is the right thing. The next thing to do is the wrong thing. The worst thing to do is nothing at all.”

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How a New Weight-Loss Pill Could Transform Health

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



In an hour-long meeting at Eli Lilly and Company's headquarters in Indianapolis on April 15, the pharmaceutical company's top executives met, like they had dozens of times before, to hear the long-awaited results of a study involving a new drug.

There's always a lot riding on these presentations, called readouts. But this one, for Lilly's first diabetes and weight-loss pill based on the GLP-1 hormone, was particularly fraught. Days before, rival pharma giant Pfizer had announced it was abandoning its oral weight-loss drug after worrying side effects involving liver problems were reported in one participant in the trial. It was the second drug in its class that had failed for Pfizer.

So, David Ricks, Lilly's CEO, was understandably cautious. It was the latest in a string of milestone moments for the understated leader of the country's most dynamic pharmaceutical company. Lilly executives took TIME inside the complex process of developing the new pill that unfolded over a series of conversations and a visit to the company's headquarters and labs in Indianapolis to detail both the scientific advancements as well as the unique culture at the pharma giant that made the drug possible. And now it all came down to this meeting. Early phase studies had been promising, but anything can happen when a new drug is tested on thousands more people.

"In my job as CEO, I've walked into a room like that about 30 times, and most of them have been for successful drugs—but there have been failures," he says. "You can kind of tell by the way people are sitting what the outcome is going to be. But what you don't know is the degree."

MAY 12, 2025

TIME

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The body language was encouraging. And the data, outlined in about 50 slides shown to Ricks and his team over the course of the hour, was clear: The pill, called orforglipron, was a success.

For the diabetes patients in the study, taking the drug daily lowered their A1C—a measure of their blood sugar—and helped them lose weight at slightly lower rates as Lilly’s injectable drug in the same category, tirzepatide (known as Mounjaro). Tirzepatide targets two weight-related hormones while orforglipron only targets one, so the fact that orforglipron came close was impressive. But it wasn’t until Ricks saw the slide comparing the side effects experienced by those on the drug vs. those receiving placebo that he was truly reassured. There were no liver issues recorded, and the side effects, such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and constipation, were similar to those linked to tirzepatide. “When that slide came up, I was like, ‘OK, we have a drug,’ ” says Ricks.

Orforglipron still has more hurdles to clear before the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) decides whether to approve it. And while establishing the benefits among people with diabetes is a critical first step, Lilly is conducting further studies. This summer, Ricks expects to sit through a few more meetings like this one, when his team will see results from studies testing the drug as a weight-loss treatment in people who are overweight or obese but don’t have diabetes. Still, these first findings are exciting and reassuring, Ricks says, since the drug appears safe, and people with diabetes tend to lose less weight on these types of medications than people without diabetes.

If orforglipron is eventually approved by federal regulators, it would become the first GLP-1 oral drug for weight loss to hit the market. While Novo Nordisk currently makes an oral GLP-1 drug, it’s only approved for diabetes; it also uses a lower dose than orforglipron and produces about half the weight loss on average. Orlforglipron comes with no food or drinking restrictions, while people have to take Novo’s drug 30 minutes before eating or drinking, and must limit their consumption of fatty, spicy, and sweet foods.

The implications—if Lilly’s drug makes it through the testing and review process—could be transformative, not just for the company, but for patients.



The promise and excitement around orforglipron stems from [what doctors have learned](#) about popular injectable medicines—Mounjaro, Zepbound, Ozempic, and Wegovy—that target a group of hormones known as incretins, which include GLP-1. They are potent ways to treat diabetes and obesity, yes, but they’ve also helped reduce the risk of heart disease, sleep apnea, and other chronic conditions associated with weight, including kidney and liver diseases. Even beyond chronic conditions, there is encouraging evidence that they may help to address addiction—because of the way they affect satiety and reward centers in the brain—and even Alzheimer’s, thanks to their anti-inflammatory features. (These are not benign medications for everyone who takes them, however, and have been [linked to many side effects](#) ranging

from mild to severe, from gastrointestinal issues to blood clots, an eye disease, [hair loss](#), and more.)

As a pill, orforglipron would be cheaper to make and reach more people than its injectable predecessors, since it wouldn't require refrigeration to store or special injector pens to use.

“We can think about its use in disease beyond Type 2 diabetes and obesity,” says Dr. Dan Skovronsky, Lilly’s chief scientific officer, “where patients typically want an oral medicine. We’re testing it for hypertension, for example.” An oral medicine that’s more effective than current treatments could transform the way obesity is managed, potentially even preventing people who are on the verge of diabetes or obesity from developing the diseases at all by helping them control their blood sugar or weight with a daily pill. As doctors and patients start relying on these new treatments, a drug like orforglipron may play a role in helping people to maintain weight loss, which remains challenging.

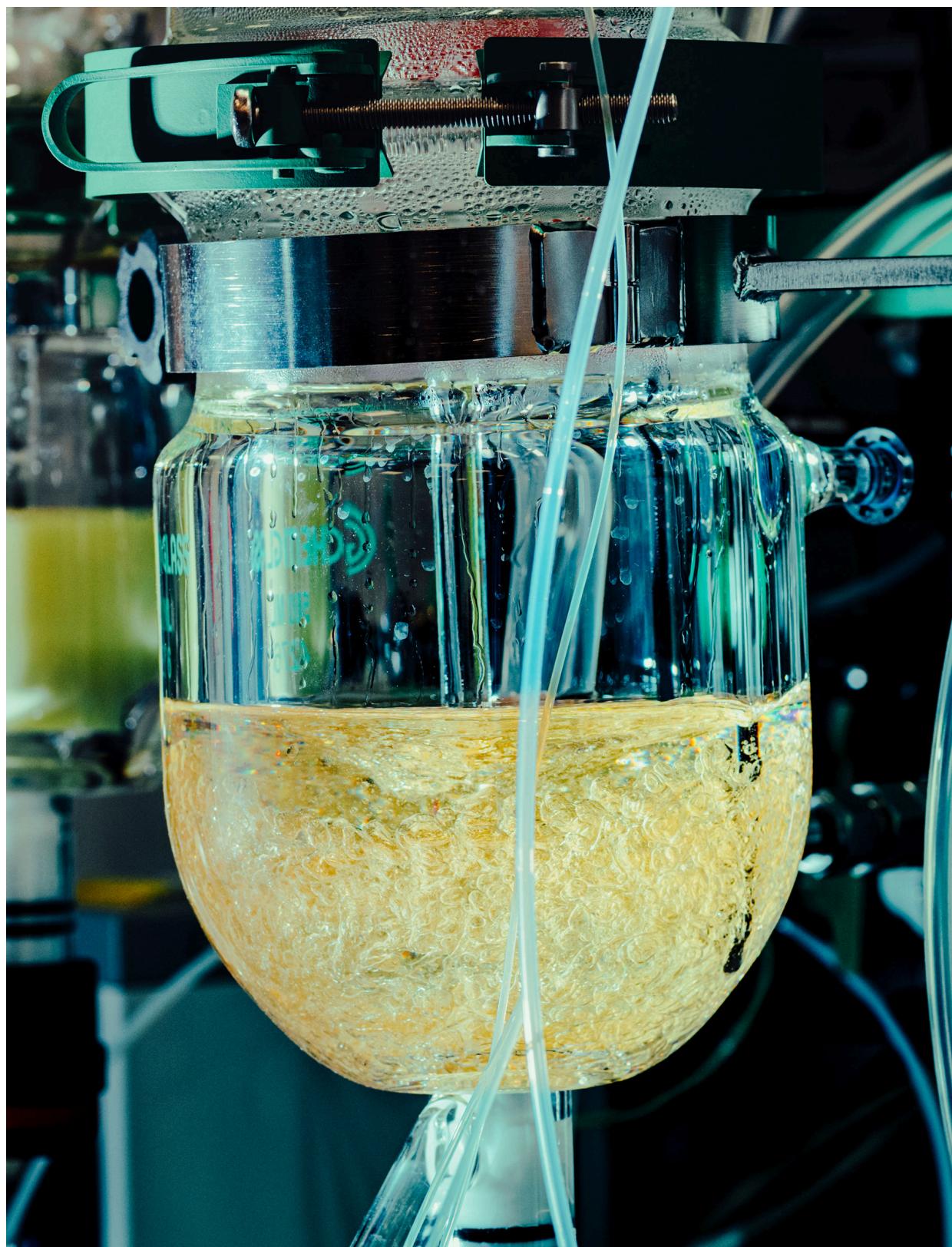
“After people have lost weight, maybe by using an injectable, could they stay on an oral [medicine] to maintain their weight?” says Skovronsky. “These are the kinds of ideas we’re thinking about for how an oral medication might fit in on broad population uses.”

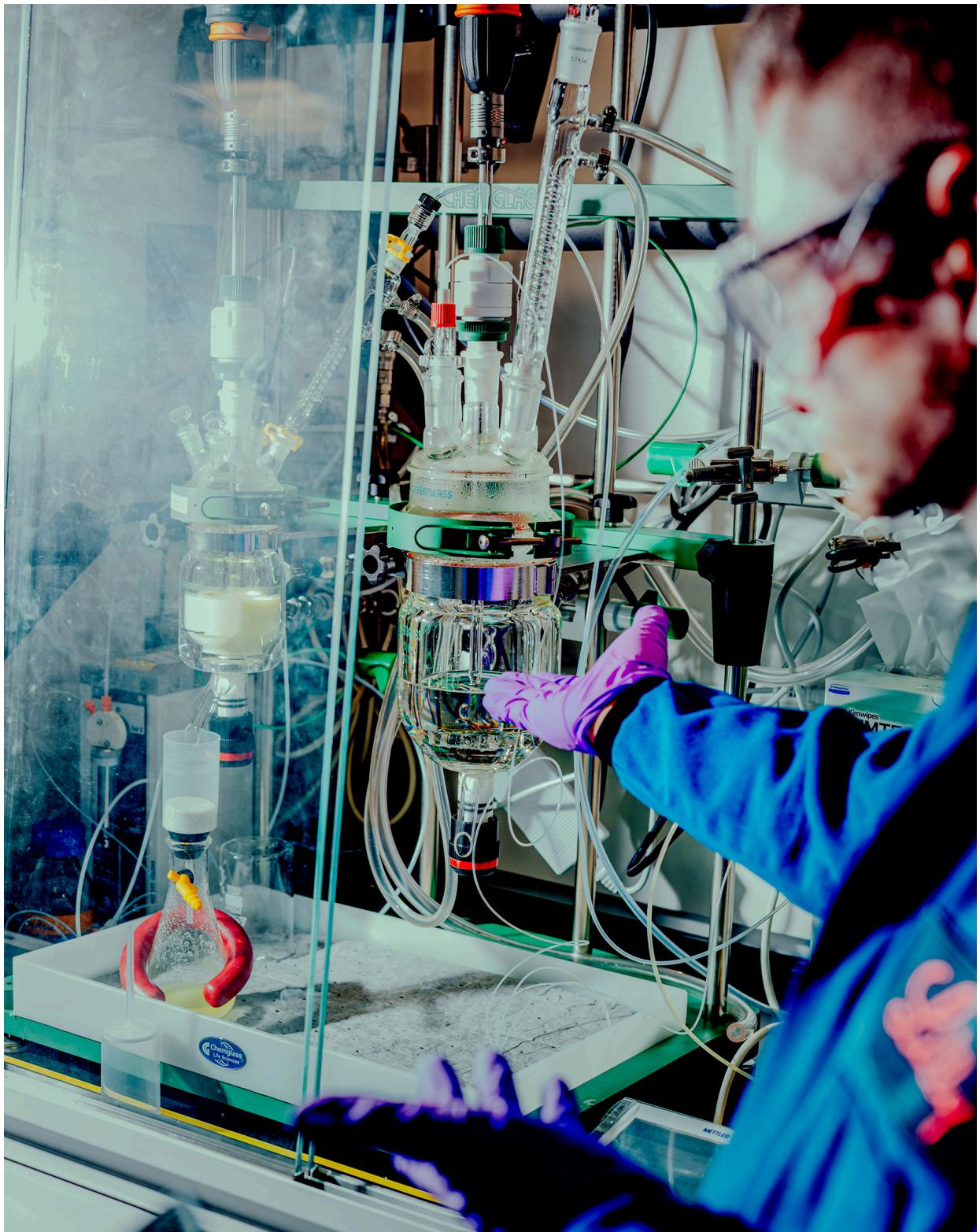
All of this could unlock a huge financial windfall for Lilly. The market for injectable anti-obesity drugs, currently dominated by Zepbound (made by Lilly) and Wegovy (from Novo Nordisk), is expected to grow to \$100 billion in sales by 2030. A pill would expand this market in significant ways, and potentially dominate it, by reaching people in parts of the world where an injectable drug that has to be refrigerated is simply out of reach.

A more accessible way to manage weight—and the myriad chronic conditions linked to obesity—could transform not just the health care system as more people potentially avoid the heart, liver, and kidney diseases that currently account for much of the health care burden worldwide, but also the processed food and diet industries that have fueled and capitalized on the obesity epidemic. Because the medications are so effective in curbing appetite, demand for high-calorie and sweetened foods and beverages is

already dipping in some instances, and significant shifts in what people eat, and how much they consume, are likely to follow.

Most drug companies are lucky to have one breakthrough or blockbuster drug at a time. Lilly has two (and counting). In July 2024, it received FDA approval for Kisunla, an Alzheimer's treatment that reduces symptoms of cognitive decline more dramatically than any other drug. It also announced encouraging early results in 2024 from its new gene therapy, which helped a deaf boy hear again. All of this has made Lilly, at nearly 150 years old, the most valuable drug company in the world and potentially on its way to becoming the first trillion-dollar health-care company.





Since Ricks became CEO in 2017, the company's market capitalization, a reflection of the value of the company's stock, has soared to nearly \$700

billion—nearly double that of the next-most valuable pharma company, Johnson & Johnson. Yet Ricks is not exactly the ruthless corporate titan you might expect to lead such an aggressive drive to make history. More mild-mannered than take-charge showman, Ricks prefers to take an under-the-radar approach to dominating the industry.

He regularly grabs lunch at the company cafeteria, and when he is, as he describes it, “flummoxed” about something, “I go talk to people on the ground. I’ve got a big job, and they know who I am. These are hourly workers, but they’re not impressed by me. They’re basically like, ‘Fix this, it’s frustrating.’ They’ll tell you what’s wrong.”

And Ricks finds a way to fix it fast—an approach that has [earned him admirers among fellow CEOs](#).

When Ricks joined Lilly right out of business school in 1996, he never imagined he’d one day run it. His fiancée—now wife—was in medical school at Indiana University, and he just needed a job. “It was a necessity in a way,” he says of his first job at the company. Roles in sales, marketing, and overseeing operations in the U.S. and abroad led him to the top job in 2017.

By the time he became CEO, Lilly was already known for launching the first human insulin in 1982—which was also the first recombinant drug of any kind approved by the FDA—along with other diabetes treatments and blockbuster drugs in other disease areas, like Prozac for depression in 1987.

Concerned that Lilly was perhaps getting too complacent from its past success, in his first speech as CEO to 150 company executives, he emphasized three things Lilly needed to prioritize in order to maintain its leading role in the pharmaceutical world: speed, an openness to looking outside its four walls to enrich its pipeline, and teamwork. “We’re seeking to be the fastest-moving large pharma company, which I think we basically are, but now we’re trying to beat our own benchmarks,” he says. Orforglipron was developed in six years, which is 30% to 40% faster than any competitor, Ricks says.



He has brought a greater willingness to acquire and bring in outside experts and ideas—something Lilly historically liked to keep in house. Former board members saw Lilly's focus on building internal expertise for specific diseases as a double-edged sword: while it gave the company in-depth knowledge that could streamline drug development strategies, it was also insular and limiting when it came to ensuring Lilly had access to the most innovative strategies. “We often, at our worst, were pretty satisfied,” Ricks says of the company’s culture. “We’re here in Indianapolis—we’re the anchor tenant of the city and state, and we’re the largest employer. Pretty much if you live here and work at Lilly, all your neighbors think you’re awesome. And so you think you’re awesome. But sometimes you are, and sometimes you’re not. Improvement starts by re-basing what your assumptions are about what ‘good’ is.”

Finding new ways to control blood sugar was the perfect test case. “When I arrived, there was a moment to go beyond insulin,” says Ricks. In the early 2000s, Lilly partnered with biotech Amylin Pharmaceuticals to develop the first-in-class drugs that would eventually lead to Mounjaro. “It was a big step, although the drug needed to be improved a lot to be as useful as the ones we have today,” says Ricks.

The potential was obvious. So was the drive. “If it’s going to be a great drug,” Ricks told his leadership team, “let’s make sure it says Lilly on it.”

Orforglipron was just such a drug. By 2018, Ricks also had a comrade-in-arms in Skovronsky, who had joined the company after Lilly acquired his biotech company in 2010. Like Ricks, Skovronsky wasn’t shy about questioning the inertia that often plagues a big company like Lilly. At a meeting discussing drug development timelines, in which it was clear that Lilly fell shy of industry benchmarks, “I kind of spoke up and said, ‘If I understand correctly, our goal is to be below average?’” says Skovronsky.

Like Ricks, he was eager to ensure that the company didn’t miss important opportunities because they weren’t looking for them—opportunities such as orforglipron. The drug was developed by the Japanese pharmaceutical company Chugai, which had found a way to put some of the weight-loss features of the incretins into an oral form that wouldn’t lose all its potency and get chewed up by the acids in the stomach and digestive system.

Compelled by the early data, Ricks decided in 2018 to license the development and commercialization of the drug. That was just a year after Ozempic, Novo Nordisk’s diabetes drug, was approved by the FDA and four years before Lilly’s first incretin-based diabetes treatment, Mounjaro, was launched. There was no way to predict then that these drugs would go on to transform the treatment of diabetes and obesity. “If [orgforglipron] is successful, it will go down as probably the best business development deal in the history of pharma,” says Ricks of that early decision. “And our team went out and found it.”



However, the promising molecule required double the number of steps to build than typical small-molecule medications. It had only been made in

small quantities for early testing in animals and a small number of people. Sarah O’Keeffe, senior vice president of product development and research, remembers the marching orders from her managers: “Sarah and team, you go figure out how to do that quickly,” she says.

O’Keeffe and her team were accustomed to building drugs that required maybe a dozen steps. Orforglipron required 30. Using Ricks’ north star of speed, and nudged by increasing competition in the field, O’Keeffe and her team took a risk and proposed an entirely new manufacturing process—one that would prioritize efficiency and environmental safety by using fewer solvents and producing less waste. She and her team tweaked the process they had used to mass produce tirzepatide, a peptide, to now make a small molecule, orgforglipron, which they hadn’t done before.

[video id=xgUqgZP6 autostart="viewable"]

They created a mini version of the manufacturing process and invited Ricks to the lab to explain the new approach and get his approval to build it to scale. “They had this little skunk works kind of thing and said it was seven times more efficient,” he says. Within days, he greenlit the switch to the riskier, but potentially more efficient manufacturing process. “That decision, and that process...is a big part of our success now,” he says. “We would be backlogged for years if we were just using the old process.”

Encouraging such enterprise didn’t happen overnight. Ricks faced a problem that’s likely unique to a company founded and grounded in the heartland of the Midwest: people at the company were too nice and too respectful of one another—to the point that they would rarely contradict or argue in meetings. “Lilly nice,” as it’s known in the company, was actually dampening creativity since there was little incentive to risk raising alternative views at meetings.

Ricks had to introduce conflict and contrary opinions in meetings to induce richer discussion and honest evaluation of projects and their risks and benefits. He encouraged teams to assign a devil’s advocate to argue a dissenting view and present a case for going against the conventional wisdom or majority opinion. Ricks has his own devil’s advocates on his

board and on his management team; he turns to them when making critical decisions about whether to invest billions of dollars, for example, to take a promising drug into late-stage human trials. “They’re one-way doors,” he says of the expensive studies. “You can only start. You cannot stop once you begin these studies, so you better set them up the right way, and you better be sure about the ones you advance.”

While Lilly has been satisfactorily answering to its shareholders in recent years, rewarding them with about \$34 billion in annual revenue, it and other pharmaceutical companies are increasingly having to answer to a public that is demanding broader access to medicines at lower prices. In response, Ricks launched Lilly Direct in 2024, turning Lilly into the first pharmaceutical company to offer its products, including tirzepatide, directly to consumers—and for those paying out of pocket, at a slightly lower cost. “It was about taking out intermediaries,” says Ricks of the usual way that prescription drugs move from manufacturers like Lilly, through large distributors and pharmacy benefit managers who maintain formularies and set the prices patients see, to pharmacies. “There’s a lot of dialogue about middlemen in health care, and we said, ‘OK, let’s just skip all that.’ For people who don’t have insurance, what can we do? We can have a lower price point. And we can offer it directly to them.”

About 100,000 people purchase Zepbound for weight loss through Lilly Direct each month, which represents about 10% of the people using the drug. For many patients, it’s a cheaper, easier alternative to the traditional pharmacy route. And it’s setting a precedent for how patients may soon be getting their prescription drugs; in March, Novo Nordisk announced its NovoCare Pharmacy, which also provides its weight-loss medication directly to consumers.





For Ricks, it was the logical next step after being the first company to drop prices of insulin to \$35 a month out of pocket for patients. The two decisions

build on the Lilly 30×30 program that was launched the year before he became CEO, which aims to provide its drugs to 30 million people each year by 2030. “Why didn’t these things happen earlier? I don’t know, but I think people feel constrained by norms, and we just pushed beyond them. Do what you do well, where you can, and push the boundary where that’s not enough.”

Companies like Lilly may only be able to push those boundaries so far, especially when it comes to regulatory decisions and economic pressures such as the tariffs the Trump Administration is planning to levy on imports. Pharmaceuticals have been exempt from the first round of tariffs, but on April 14, the Administration began investigating potential taxes on pharmaceuticals as well as the ingredients used to make them. While some of the materials required to make orfoglipron come from Europe, Ricks says that in five years, he anticipates that all of the GLP-1-based drugs for the U.S. market will be manufactured domestically. “We are planning for global introduction of orfoglipron, and we’re ramping up new factories to come online to support that global use,” he says. He’s invested nearly \$50 billion since 2020 in expanding and building four new Lilly manufacturing facilities in the U.S., including in North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Indianapolis. The Indianapolis facility includes a manufacturing plant that will begin producing drugs in 2026 and a site that represents the largest investment to make active pharmaceutical ingredients for synthetic medicines in the country’s history. Lilly will also announce three more such sites in the U.S. this year.

“The key thing is to direct our research intensity not where the market is today, but where the problem is today,” Ricks says. For orfoglipron, that meant taking a risk on a tricky compound with big ambitions—and, he hopes, being proven right.

Correction, April 17

The original version of this story misspelled Sarah O’Keefe’s last name. It is O’Keefe, not O’Keefe.

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Exclusive: AI Outsmarts Virus Experts in the Lab, Raising Biohazard Fears

Chow is a technology correspondent at TIME. He covers crypto, AI, tech regulation, and culture.



A new study claims that AI models like ChatGPT and Claude now outperform PhD-level virologists in problem-solving in wet labs, where scientists analyze chemicals and biological material. This discovery is a double-edged sword, experts say. Ultra-smart AI models could help researchers prevent the spread of infectious diseases. But non-experts could also weaponize the models to create deadly bioweapons.

The [study](#), shared exclusively with TIME, was conducted by researchers at the Center for AI Safety, MIT's Media Lab, the Brazilian university UFABC, and the pandemic prevention nonprofit SecureBio. The authors consulted virologists to create an extremely difficult practical test which measured the ability to troubleshoot complex lab procedures and protocols. While PhD-level virologists scored an average of 22.1% in their declared areas of expertise, OpenAI's o3 reached 43.8% accuracy. Google's Gemini 2.5 Pro scored 37.6%.

Seth Donoughe, a research scientist at SecureBio and a co-author of the paper, says that the results make him a “little nervous,” because for the first time in history, virtually anyone has access to a non-judgmental AI virology expert which might walk them through complex lab processes to create bioweapons.

“Throughout history, there are a fair number of cases where someone attempted to make a bioweapon—and one of the major reasons why they didn’t succeed is because they didn’t have access to the right level of expertise,” he says. “So it seems worthwhile to be cautious about how these capabilities are being distributed.”

Months ago, the paper’s authors sent the results to the major AI labs. In response, xAI [published](#) a risk management framework pledging its intention to implement virology safeguards for future versions of its AI model Grok. OpenAI told TIME that it “deployed new system-level mitigations for biological risks” for its new models released [last week](#). Anthropic included model performance results on the paper in recent system cards, but did not propose specific mitigation measures. Google’s Gemini declined to comment to TIME.

AI in biomedicine

Virology and biomedicine have long been at the forefront of AI leaders’ motivations for building ever-powerful AI models. “As this technology progresses, we will see diseases get cured at an unprecedented rate,” OpenAI CEO Sam Altman [said](#) at the White House in January while announcing the [Stargate](#) project. There have been some encouraging signs

in this area. Earlier this year, researchers at the University of Florida's Emerging Pathogens Institute [published](#) an algorithm capable of predicting which coronavirus variant might spread the fastest.

But up to this point, there had not been a major study dedicated to analyzing AI models' ability to actually conduct virology lab work. "We've known for some time that AIs are fairly strong at providing academic style information," says Donoughe. "It's been unclear whether the models are also able to offer detailed practical assistance. This includes interpreting images, information that might not be written down in any academic paper, or material that is socially passed down from more experienced colleagues."

So Donoughe and his colleagues created a test specifically for these difficult, non-Google-able questions. "The questions take the form: 'I have been culturing this particular virus in this cell type, in these specific conditions, for this amount of time. I have this amount of information about what's gone wrong. Can you tell me what is the most likely problem?'" Donoughe says.

And virtually every AI model outperformed PhD-level virologists on the test, even within their own areas of expertise. The researchers also found that the models showed significant improvement over time. Anthropic's Claude 3.5 Sonnet, for example, jumped from 26.9% to 33.6% accuracy from its June 2024 model to its October 2024 model. And a preview of OpenAI's GPT 4.5 in February outperformed GPT-4o by almost 10 percentage points.

"Previously, we found that the models had a lot of theoretical knowledge, but not practical knowledge," Dan Hendrycks, the director of the Center for AI Safety, tells TIME. "But now, they are getting a concerning amount of practical knowledge."

Risks and rewards

If AI models are indeed as capable in wet lab settings as the study finds, then the implications are massive. In terms of benefits, AIs could help experienced virologists in their critical work fighting viruses. Tom Inglesby,

the director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, says that AI could assist with accelerating the timelines of medicine and vaccine development and improving clinical trials and disease detection. “These models could help scientists in different parts of the world, who don’t yet have that kind of skill or capability, to do valuable day-to-day work on diseases that are occurring in their countries,” he says. For instance, one group of researchers [found](#) that AI helped them better understand hemorrhagic fever viruses in sub-Saharan Africa.

But bad-faith actors can now use AI models to walk them through how to create viruses—and will be able to do so without any of the typical training required to access a Biosafety Level 4 (BSL-4) laboratory, which deals with the most dangerous and exotic infectious agents. “It will mean a lot more people in the world with a lot less training will be able to manage and manipulate viruses,” Inglesby says.

Hendrycks urges AI companies to put up guardrails to prevent this type of usage. “If companies don’t have good safeguards for these within six months time, that, in my opinion, would be reckless,” he says.

Hendrycks says that one solution is not to shut these models down or slow their progress, but to make them gated, so that only trusted third parties get access to their unfiltered versions. “We want to give the people who have a legitimate use for asking how to manipulate deadly viruses—like a researcher at the MIT biology department—the ability to do so,” he says. “But random people who made an account a second ago don’t get those capabilities.”

And AI labs should be able to implement these types of safeguards relatively easily, Hendrycks says. “It’s certainly technologically feasible for industry self-regulation,” he says. “There’s a question of whether some will drag their feet or just not do it.”

xAI, Elon Musk’s AI lab, published a [risk management framework](#) memo in February, which acknowledged the paper and signaled that the company would “potentially utilize” certain safeguards around answering virology questions, including training Grok to decline harmful requests and applying input and output filters.

OpenAI, in an email to TIME on Monday, wrote that its newest models, the o3 and o4-mini, were deployed with an array of biological-risk related safeguards, including blocking harmful outputs. The company wrote that it ran a thousand-hour red-teaming campaign in which 98.7% of unsafe bio-related conversations were successfully flagged and blocked. “We value industry collaboration on advancing safeguards for frontier models, including in sensitive domains like virology,” a spokesperson wrote. “We continue to invest in these safeguards as capabilities grow.”

Inglesby argues that industry self-regulation is not enough, and calls for lawmakers and political leaders to strategize a policy approach to regulating AI’s bio risks. “The current situation is that the companies that are most virtuous are taking time and money to do this work, which is good for all of us, but other companies don’t have to do it,” he says. “That doesn’t make sense. It’s not good for the public to have no insights into what’s happening.”

“When a new version of an LLM is about to be released,” Inglesby adds, “there should be a requirement for that model to be evaluated to make sure it will not produce pandemic-level outcomes.”

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Why China Laughs at the Idea of Americans Taking Their Manufacturing Jobs

Jeyaretnam is an editorial fellow at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. She covers general news around the world.



A “Make America Strong Again” banner hangs on the wall as rows upon rows of overweight workers assemble Nike sneakers; one lifts a burger up

to his mouth as he eats while working, another rests his head on the sewing machine in front of him, barely able to keep his eyes open.

It's a [caricature of U.S. manufacturing](#) that Chinese netizens have been laughing at over the past week, as social media platforms have seen a wave of AI-generated videos portraying what some think it would look like for Americans to work in sweatshop-like textile factories and iPhone assembly lines more commonly associated with China.

AI-made video mocking US 'reindustrialization' makes its rounds on Chinese social media amidst Trump tariff war
pic.twitter.com/Fwlpw466oT

— RT (@RT_com) [April 10, 2025](#)

As U.S. President Donald Trump escalates a trade war with China that he began in his first term—seeing tariffs, which are taxes on imports, as a path to restore a U.S. manufacturing sector that has [steadily declined over decades](#)—China's government has made its opposition clear: After Trump's "Liberation Day" on April 2, when he hiked tariffs on all global trade partners, Chinese [state media produced AI-generated parody videos](#) slamming Trump's approach as costly, divisive, and dangerous. After Trump announced a 90-day pause for other countries but further hiked tariffs on China, which now stand at 145%, China's finance ministry [raised its retaliatory tariff](#) on U.S. goods to 125% but said that it wouldn't continue to respond with tit-for-tat increases, arguing that doing so amounts to nothing more than a "numbers game" as the current rate already makes imports from the U.S. prohibitively expensive.

[video id=RQlx6adN autostart="viewable"]

"It would be a joke," the ministry said, promising other unspecified countermeasures if its interests continue to be infringed.

But while a trade war between the world's two biggest economies is certainly [not funny for Beijing](#), the AI-generated videos gone viral among Chinese social media users satirizing fictitious American manufacturing workers do get at a more serious truth.

[@axiang67](#)

Make america great again [#tariff #america](#)

 – Ben Lau

“The joke is Americans don’t want to do those jobs,” Mark Cogan, associate professor of peace and conflict studies at Japan’s Kansai Gaidai University and a U.S. national, tells TIME. “We’re the punch line.”

The economic reality

Trump has promised that his tariffs will usher in a “new golden age” for American workers, harkening back to an industrial past that has been lost to decades of globalization. The logic goes that by raising the price of foreign goods, businesses and consumers will be discouraged from importing and instead invest in U.S.-based manufacturing and American-made goods. But the irony, economists say, is that the trade deficits that he seeks to reverse are a sign of the [U.S. economy’s relative dominance](#), not weakness.

“The U.S. is at a state of development where it has moved beyond manufacturing,” Jayant Menon, a research fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, previously told TIME. “This is what manufacturing countries are trying to aspire to, and this guy is trying to go the other way.”

Read More: [How Trump’s Tariffs Could Lead to a Global Recession](#)

What is more likely to happen, economists say, is that as the goods that Americans are accustomed to being able to buy relatively cheaply rise dramatically in price, consumers will simply buy fewer things. And more U.S.-based manufacturing wouldn’t necessarily result in lower prices because it would still involve higher labor and operational costs. Many overseas manufacturers may calculate that paying tariffs would still be less costly than relocating to the U.S.

The main reasons why China and not the U.S. has come to be the world’s [“sole manufacturing superpower”](#), or [“the world’s factory”](#), are its greater

labor supply and thus lower wages, more efficient domestic business and supply-chain ecosystem, and relatively lax regulatory environment. Tariffs alone won't change these underlying factors for the U.S.

"If you think about producing a laptop in China vs. the U.S.," says Yuan Mei, assistant professor in the School of Economics at Singapore Management University, "in China a lot of parts and components of the laptop are produced within China, so shipping those components within the country is pretty cheap." Many other components, like chips, are produced in other Asian nations, like Japan and South Korea, which also means relatively cheaper shipping to China than to the U.S.

But the mismatch between [America's workforce](#) and China's is perhaps the biggest obstacle to shifting a significant amount of manufacturing from China to the U.S. In the U.S., as of March 2025, just under [13 million workers](#) are employed in the manufacturing sector, while just over 7 million of some 340 million Americans are unemployed. China's manufacturing sector, meanwhile, employs [more than 100 million people](#), while higher unemployment in the nation of 1.4 billion alongside lax regulations have helped to suppress wages and labor conditions.

While many Americans—80% of respondents to a [CATO Institute survey](#)—agree in principle with the idea that the U.S. would be better off if more Americans worked in manufacturing, far fewer would actually want to take such a job themselves: only 25% of the CATO survey's respondents said they believed they would be better off in a manufacturing job.

Moreover, economists have [noted](#) that much of the manufacturing work that could be transplanted to the U.S. may actually be more efficient if automated, or done by machines instead of humans, while many of the human jobs that would be needed may require skills that the U.S. is short on.

The manufacturing sector relies heavily on engineers, Mei says, and engineering is among China's most popular college majors. In the U.S., on the other hand, a [large proportion](#) of engineering and tech talent comes from abroad—and with the Trump Administration's crackdowns on immigrants and [international students](#), there might eventually be, Mei says, a "gap in

the supply” of engineers that the U.S. needs to boost its domestic manufacturing.

From mocking to hawking

Mei tells TIME he noticed the memes of American factory workers started to spread in recent weeks amid the escalating U.S.-China trade war, when Chinese social media users began wondering what American products may become more expensive due to Chinese retaliatory tariffs. That morphed into conversations about the difference between a brand being American, of which there are many cases, and its manufacturing being U.S.-based, which is much rarer.

“Many netizens realized that there are few examples of daily products that are produced in the U.S.,” says Mei, noting the exceptions of very expensive high tech instruments, aircraft, and pharmaceutical products.

[@buddhawang](#)

[#trump #maga](#)

[♫ – buddhawang](#)

Rather, the U.S.’s comparative advantage is in the services sector, Mei says: “Think Silicon Valley.” (Some observers [believe](#) that in the trade war, Beijing will next target U.S. services exports, leveling tariffs and ramping up other restrictions on American professional, legal, technological, telecommunications, education, health, entertainment, and other services, many of which have already been heavily scrutinized in China.)

The AI-generated videos depicting Americans taking factory jobs, says Ashley Dudarenok, who runs a China and Hong Kong-based consumer-research consultancy, relied on subverting a “long-standing stereotype about global labor dynamics.” And quickly, she tells TIME, the image was “absolutely everywhere, and it’s still trending.”

“There was the trade war, there was the tariff war, and now there is the meme war,” Dudarenok says.

Even among the Chinese workforce, [more](#) and [more](#) aspire to work in sectors other than manufacturing. Dudarenok says across Chinese social media she’s seen comments saying, “Chinese people don’t want to do these jobs, why would Americans want to do these jobs?” or “Chinese manufacturers are moving into Vietnam, into Africa—now we have another option: America.”

Still, the tariffs are no joke to those in China whose livelihoods depend on manufacturing goods for export. Some have also [taken to social media](#) to respond to the tariffs: by explaining how cheaply they actually manufacture goods and how much of the price consumers paid pre-tariffs came from brand markups.

China is retaliating against by exposing the 100%-1000% markups by US brands on items manufactured in China for pennies on the dollar.

1/x

Lululemon: pic.twitter.com/TrDGlaVcCN

— Bugman Hegel (@FedPoasting) [April 14, 2025](#)

Some have even appealed to Americans to buy directly from them. “They want to get rid of the middleman,” says Mei. But consumers should beware that claiming to manufacture for big brands while actually producing knock-offs is a common scam, and some scammers could be exploiting consumer panic about potential price hikes. While China [produces](#) more than half of the world’s clothing and textiles, Dudarenok says manufacturers that are “trusted partners” with big brands don’t typically sell their partners out so easily.

Read More: [How Trump’s Trade War Could Boost Slow Fashion](#)

A messaging win for Beijing

If social media sentiment is anything to go off of, Mei says that there's a lot of support among Chinese citizens for the government's policy decisions related to Trump's trade war. "It's seen as a good thing that they are imposing retaliatory tariffs. A small share of Chinese netizens are still worried, and say that maybe we should just yield to the U.S., but the majority agree with the stance of the Chinese government."

The government's message is clear, Dudarenok says: "China is prepared to fight for its right to be in the room and to be at the table."

Mei has even seen [memes](#) depicting China protecting other countries from U.S. bullying or suggesting China is the one country brave enough to stand up for itself.

But the sentiment isn't just popular on Chinese social media. Reshares of posts popular on Chinese social media to X and TikTok, which are blocked within mainland China though still accessed by many users via VPNs, have garnered millions of views and tens of thousands of likes. Although it's not clear who is generating and sharing the original videos, Cogan, the peace and conflict studies professor in Japan, says it's nevertheless a "huge win for China."

"I think that the Chinese understand quite well the fact that American society is quite divided, and at this particular stage of our political polarization, Americans really don't care whose propaganda they are spreading or where the meme actually comes from—so they're willing to spread whatever ... as long as it furthers their own political messaging."

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10 Questions You Should Always Ask at Doctors' Appointments

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



When you go to the doctor, you're probably the one answering most of the questions. Yet it's essential to make sure you're asking plenty of your own. "We need to get someone to fund a bazillion-dollar PSA to tell people to be bolder when they talk to their doctors," says Risa Arin, founder and CEO of [XpertPatient](#), a patient education platform. "I see this over and over again: People aren't asking any questions, never mind the right ones."

We asked experts to share the questions you should ask your doctor to help you get well or stay that way.

“What screenings should I get?”

Exactly which health screenings you need, and when, depends on factors like age, sex, personal medical history, and family history. When you’re at your annual physical, ask your doctor what you should prioritize in the coming year, so you can be certain you don’t miss anything, suggests Dr. Jessica Edwards, founder and CEO of Zara Medical, a hybrid primary care practice. Screening yearly for mental health disorders like depression is important, too—so if your doctor doesn’t bring it up, initiate the conversation yourself, she advises.

“What vitamins and supplements might be helpful?”

Some vitamins and supplements are a waste of money. Others could be harmful. And then there are the ones that could actually benefit your health. To figure out which is which, ask your doctor, Edwards advises. “It matters because if you live in an area that isn’t sunny, you should take vitamin D,” she says. “If you’re a vegetarian, you might need to supplement vitamin B12.”

Talking through your lab reports and specific concerns can help your doctor determine which vitamins and supplements might be appropriate, while helping you steer clear of the choices that could jeopardize your health.

“How many people with my condition have you treated?”

When you receive a new diagnosis, ask your doctor if they’ve treated similar patients, Arin suggests. If the answer is no, she likes asking this follow-up: “Is there someone in the region who is an expert in this condition who you could refer me to?” When you’re dealing with a rare or complex disease, it’s often worth traveling farther away to see someone with more expertise. How your doctor responds to this conversation will help shine light on the best way to proceed, Arin says.

“What are my treatment options, and how do they compare?”

People often focus treatment questions on efficacy, but quality of life matters, too. For example: Will you need to take a daily pill—or arrange childcare, transportation, and time off work for a monthly infusion? Will you experience a weakened immune system, constant fatigue, or shaky hands that interfere with your love of knitting? Different treatment options come with “very different side effects and life experiences,” Arin points out, and influence which makes the most sense for you.

Read More: [8 Ways to Shorten Your Wait for a Doctor’s Appointment](#)

Your personal goals matter, too. Arin recalls a friend’s father who had stage 4 pancreatic cancer and told his doctor he wanted to spend his final six months doing what he loved: going to the opera as often as possible. “He had to be able to stay awake at night—he couldn’t be knocked out and exhausted,” she says. “The doctors had to think, ‘OK, here’s this wonderful man. He’s in a terrible situation. How can we help him enjoy opera?’ It set such a different tone for figuring out treatment.”

“Are there any new treatments, clinical trials, or emerging research that apply to my condition?”

The amount of innovation occurring every day in medicine is “mindboggling,” says Dr. Kate Burke, a longtime emergency medicine physician who’s a senior medical advisor for [PatientsLikeMe](#), a health empowerment community. “We’re living through a period where there’s rapid change, and conditions that historically did not have treatments or opportunities for getting better now do,” she says. Plus, if you ask this question and your doctor starts sputtering, with a glazed look on his face, that’s a helpful tell that you might want to consider seeking care elsewhere.

“What should I do if my symptoms get worse or don’t improve?”

Whether you’re at the doctor because you’re struggling with allergies, broke a bone, or are recovering from surgery, it’s essential to find out when you should start to feel better—and what kind of red flags could signal the need for more care. As Burke puts it: “If you see this, then do that.” Your doctor can tell you exactly when you should call her office or go to the emergency department—while setting your expectations for what kind of symptoms are simply part of the healing process.

“When can I expect my test results, and how will I receive them?”

If days tick by with no news about your imaging scans or blood work, your mind may dart into dark places. To ease some of that anxiety, ask your doctor when to expect results, advises Dr. Manar Harmouch, a family medicine and primary care physician with Houston Methodist Primary Care Group. That way, you’ll know certain labs take longer to process than others, and that the radio silence doesn’t necessarily mean anything bad. Find out, too, whether the results will be shared in your online portal, via a phone call, or at a follow-up appointment—and what to do if you don’t receive them when you’re supposed to, Harmouch says.

“Can you explain that in a way that’s easier to understand?”

Doctors are fluent in medicalese—and no matter how much time you spend in health care settings, it can be difficult to translate. That’s why Burke recommends always asking for simpler terms that you can truly grasp. “The clinician wants you to understand what they’re trying to tell you,” she says. “You can just be like, ‘Dr. Burke, you need to use words I can really understand,’ and then we’ll be like, ‘Oh, I’m really sorry about that. Let me slow down and try again.’”

“What kind of financial support is available?”

Always ask how your insurance will affect treatment expenses; if something isn't covered, your doctor might be able to suggest cost-effective alternatives. It's also a good idea to start a conversation about more out-of-the-box ways to chip away at medical bills, especially if you're dealing with an ongoing illness. “There's a lot of financial support available, both from pharmaceutical companies and advocacy groups,” Arin says.

“If this were your family member, what would you do?”

Tap into your doctor's empathy—and center yourself as a husband, mother, child, or grandparent, not just the sixth patient on a busy day. When Burke taught medical school students how to communicate well with their patients, she challenged them to look their patients in the eye and say: “If you were my sister, this is what I would do.”

Read More: [8 Symptoms Doctors Often Dismiss As Anxiety](#)

“Medicine isn't always straightforward,” she adds. “Sometimes doctors have to make decisions that are very difficult.” Treating the people on the exam table in front of them as they would a loved one can help ensure they're using their best judgment—a win for both clinicians and patients.

Wondering what to say in a tricky social situation? Email timetotalk@time.com

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Read Conservative Judge's Full Opinion Rebuking Trump Administration Over Abrego Garcia Case



A federal appeals court issued a unanimous decision on Thursday rejecting an appeal by the Trump Administration after a district court judge ordered sworn testimony from officials over their refusal to comply with her

previous Supreme Court-affirmed order for the Administration to “facilitate” the return of [Kilmar Abrego Garcia](#)—an El Salvadoran national who was living in Maryland with his U.S. citizen wife and U.S. citizen children and whom the Administration previously admitted to mistakenly deporting to a notorious El Salvadoran prison under the unproven allegation of gang ties.

The blistering [Fourth Circuit opinion](#) was penned by Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III, an 80-year-old conservative jurist nominated to the court in 1983 by President Ronald Reagan and who was on President George W. Bush’s shortlist of potential Supreme Court nominees. In it, Wilkinson described the Trump Administration’s defiance as “shocking” and implored the Administration to respect the rule of law, warning that it is “all too possible to see in this case an incipient crisis.”

Read Wilkinson’s full opinion below.

Upon review of the government’s motion, the court denies the motion for an emergency stay pending appeal and for a writ of mandamus. The relief the government is requesting is both extraordinary and premature. While we fully respect the Executive’s robust assertion of its Article II powers, we shall not micromanage the efforts of a fine district judge attempting to implement the Supreme Court’s recent decision.

[video id=X8wU8nF9 autostart="viewable"]

It is difficult in some cases to get to the very heart of the matter. But in this case, it is not hard at all. The government is asserting a right to stash away residents of this country in foreign prisons without the semblance of due process that is the foundation of our constitutional order. Further, it claims in essence that because it has rid itself of custody that there is nothing that can be done.

This should be shocking not only to judges, but to the intuitive sense of liberty that Americans far removed from courthouses still hold dear.

The government asserts that Abrego Garcia is a terrorist and a member of MS-13. Perhaps, but perhaps not. Regardless, he is still entitled to due process. If the government is confident of its position, it should be assured that position will prevail in proceedings to terminate the withholding of removal order. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 208.24(f) (requiring that the government prove “by a preponderance of evidence” that the alien is no longer entitled to a withholding of removal). Moreover, the government has conceded that Abrego Garcia was wrongly or “mistakenly” deported. Why then should it not make what was wrong, right?

The Supreme Court’s decision remains, as always, our guidepost. That decision rightly requires the lower federal courts to give “due regard for the deference owed to the Executive Branch in the conduct of foreign affairs.” *Noem v. Abrego Garcia*, No. 24A949, slip op. at 2 (U.S. Apr. 10, 2025); *see also United States v. Curtiss-Wright Exp. Corp.*, 299 U.S. 304, 319 (1936). That would allow sensitive diplomatic negotiations to be removed from public view. It would recognize as well that the “facilitation” of Abrego Garcia’s return leaves the Executive Branch with options in the execution to which the courts in accordance with the Supreme Court’s decision should extend a genuine deference. That decision struck a balance that does not permit lower courts to leave Article II by the wayside.

The Supreme Court’s decision does not, however, allow the government to do essentially nothing. It requires the government “to ‘facilitate’ Abrego Garcia’s release from custody in El Salvador and to ensure that his case is handled as it would have been had he not been improperly sent to El Salvador.” *Abrego Garcia, supra*, slip op. at 2. “Facilitate” is an active verb. It requires that steps be taken as the Supreme Court has made perfectly clear. See *Abrego Garcia, supra*, slip op. at 2 (“[T]he Government should be prepared to share what it can concerning the steps it has taken and the prospect of further steps.”). The plain and active meaning of the word cannot be diluted by its constriction, as the government would have it, to a narrow term of art. We are not bound in this context by a definition crafted by an administrative agency and contained in a mere policy directive. *Cf. Loper Bright Enters. v. Raimondo*, 603 U.S. 369, 400 (2024); *Christensen v. Harris Cnty.*, 529 U.S. 576, 587 (2000). Thus, the government’s argument that all it must do is “remove any domestic barriers to [Abrego Garcia’s]

return,” Mot. for Stay at 2 , is not well taken in light of the Supreme Court’s command that the government facilitate Abrego Garcia’s *release from custody in El Salvador*.

“Facilitation” does not permit the admittedly erroneous deportation of an individual to the one country’s prisons that the withholding order forbids and, further, to do so in disregard of a court order that the government not so subtly spurns. “Facilitation” does not sanction the abrogation of habeas corpus through the transfer of custody to foreign detention centers in the manner attempted here. Allowing all this would “facilitate” foreign detention more than it would domestic return. It would reduce the rule of law to lawlessness and tarnish the very values for which Americans of diverse views and persuasions have always stood.

The government is obviously frustrated and displeased with the rulings of the court. Let one thing be clear. Court rulings are not above criticism. Criticism keeps us on our toes and helps us do a better job. See *Cooper v. Aaron*, 358 U.S. 1 , 24 (1958) (Frankfurter, J. , concurring) (“Criticism need not be stilled. Active obstruction or defiance is barred.”). Court rulings can overstep, and they can further intrude upon the prerogatives of other branches. Courts thus speak with the knowledge of their imperfections but also with a sense that they instill a fidelity to law that would be sorely missed in their absence.

“Energy in the [E]xecutive” is much to be respected. FEDERALIST NO. 70, at 423 (1789) (Alexander Hamilton) (Clinton Rossiter ed., 1961). It can rescue government from its lassitude and recalibrate imbalances too long left unexamined. The knowledge that executive energy is a perishable quality understandably breeds impatience with the courts. Courts, in turn, are frequently attuned to caution and are often uneasy with the Executive Branch’s breakneck pace.

And the differences do not end there. The Executive is inherently focused upon ends; the Judiciary much more so upon means. Ends are bestowed on the Executive by electoral outcomes. Means are entrusted to all of government, but most especially to the Judiciary by the Constitution itself.

The Executive possesses enormous powers to prosecute and to deport, but with powers come restraints. If today the Executive claims the right to deport without due process and in disregard of court orders, what assurance will there be tomorrow that it will not deport American citizens and then disclaim responsibility to bring them home?* And what assurance shall there be that the Executive will not train its broad discretionary powers upon its political enemies? The threat, even if not the actuality, would always be present, and the Executive's obligation to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed" would lose its meaning. U.S. CONST. art. II, § 3; *see also id.* art. II, § 1, cl. 8.

[* See, e.g., Michelle Stoddart, '*Homegrown are Next': Trump Doubles Down on Sending American 'Criminals' to Foreign Prisons*', ABC NEWS (Apr. 14, 2025, 6:04 PM); David Rutz, *Trump Open to Sending Violent American Criminals to El Salvador Prisons*, FOX NEWS (Apr. 15, 2025, 11:01 AM EDT).]

Today, both the United States and the El Salvadoran governments disclaim any authority and/or responsibility to return Abrego Garcia. *See President Trump Participates in a Bilateral Meeting with the President of El Salvador*, WHITE HOUSE (Apr. 14, 2025). We are told that *neither* government has the power to act. The result will be to leave matters generally and Abrego Garcia specifically in an interminable limbo without recourse to law of any sort.

The basic differences between the branches mandate a serious effort at mutual respect. The respect that courts must accord the Executive must be reciprocated by the Executive's respect for the courts. Too often today this has not been the case, as calls for impeachment of judges for decisions the Executive disfavors and exhortations to disregard court orders sadly illustrate.

It is in this atmosphere that we are reminded of President Eisenhower's sage example. Putting his "personal opinions" aside, President Eisenhower honored his "inescapable" duty to enforce the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education II* to desegregate schools "with all deliberate speed." Address by the President of the United States, Delivered from his Office at the White House 1-2 (Sept. 24, 1957); 349 U.S. 294, 301 (1955).

This great man expressed his unflagging belief that “[t]he very basis of our individual rights and freedoms is the certainty that the President and the Executive Branch of Government will support and [e]nsure the carrying out of the decisions of the Federal Courts.” *Id.* at 3. Indeed, in our late Executive’s own words, “[u]nless the President did so, anarchy would result.” *Id.*

Now the branches come too close to grinding irrevocably against one another in a conflict that promises to diminish both. This is a losing proposition all around. The Judiciary will lose much from the constant intimations of its illegitimacy, to which by dint of custom and detachment we can only sparingly reply. The Executive will lose much from a public perception of its lawlessness and all of its attendant contagions. The Executive may succeed for a time in weakening the courts, but over time history will script the tragic gap between what was and all that might have been, and law in time will sign its epitaph.

It is, as we have noted, all too possible to see in this case an incipient crisis, but it may present an opportunity as well. We yet cling to the hope that it is not naïve to believe our good brethren in the Executive Branch perceive the rule of law as vital to the American ethos. This case presents their unique chance to vindicate that value and to summon the best that is within us while there is still time.

In sum, and for the reasons foregoing, we deny the motion for the stay pending appeal and the writ of mandamus in this case. It is so ordered.

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Why China-Taiwan Relations Are Getting So Tense

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



Since the inaugurations of [William Lai](#) as Taiwan's President in May 2024 and [Donald Trump](#) as U.S. President in January, Beijing has been on edge. Will Lai take provocative actions that demand a response? And what is Trump's attitude toward Taiwan and its fight to remain outside China's orbit?

The answers have proved complicated. In the early days of his presidency, Lai carefully avoided riling Beijing unnecessarily. The [strength of Taiwan's economy](#) last year appeared to relieve him of any political need to rally his nationalist base with fist-shaking actions or rhetoric toward the mainland. But his Democratic Progressive Party lacks a parliamentary majority, and he [can't be sure](#) the Trump Administration has his back. Whatever his political intent, Lai has become more strident on cross-Taiwan Strait questions in recent weeks.

On March 13, Lai delivered a speech in which he [proposed 17 steps](#) Taiwan should take to counter threats posed by China and its bid to infiltrate his government and Taiwanese society. Predictably, Beijing one-upped him, with 18 pieces of official commentary via state media that attacked Lai and his plans. Two weeks later, he was denounced as a “danger maker” and China’s People’s Liberation Army released propaganda videos simulating a blockade of the self-ruled island. If that was too subtle, China’s navy [conducted joint exercises around Taiwan on April 1](#) to simulate an “assault on maritime and ground targets, and a blockade on key areas and sea lanes,” according to a PLA official. The Chinese coast guard deployed vessels in a circumnavigation patrol around Taiwan.

We’ve seen similar moves and countermoves in the waters between China and Taiwan many times before. But this time both sides are trying to decipher what the mercurial Trump really thinks.

For now, Taiwan needs to safeguard its economy against [Trump's tariff pressures](#). Lai’s negotiators held their first trade talks with the White House on April 11, shortly after [Bloomberg published an op-ed by Lai](#) that proposed a reciprocal zero-tariff regime with the U.S. and an increase in purchases and investments in the U.S. Lai then called on April 14 for a “[Taiwan plus the U.S.](#)” framework to help Taiwanese companies relocate and expand into the American market.

Though we don’t yet know his tariff intentions toward Taiwan, Trump is extremely unlikely to cut it loose, at least in the near term. Yes, he’s made clear his flexibility on territorial integrity (see [Greenland/Denmark](#), [Panama](#), and [even Canada](#)). If he won’t take on costs and risks to help Ukraine repel Russian invaders, how confident can Taiwan be that Trump

will commit U.S. troops and taxpayer funds to defend an “ally” thousands of miles from American shores?

At the same time, Trump has filled his Cabinet with China hawks, and if there’s one U.S. ally most every Republican in Washington wants to defend, it’s Taiwan against China. Beijing knows a full-scale invasion would risk direct war with the U.S., a destructive gamble for China’s already wobbly economy at a time when Trump has added 145% tariffs to its burdens.

Read More: [Why Trump Will Blink First on China](#)

For China’s leaders, it’s much safer to hold off on a full-scale invasion until the military balance more decisively favors its forces, its economy is on more solid footing, and the U.S. is led by a more predictable President. The real risk is that China will test U.S. resolve and probe Trump’s responses with [incremental escalations of pressure on Taiwan](#), none big enough on its own to create a crisis.

Would it were that simple. As U.S.-China relations further break down, the shutting down of key lines of communication between Washington and Beijing could enable any accident or miscalculation to escalate into a full-blown military crisis that both would much prefer to avoid.

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How Having a Baby Is Changing Under Trump

Semuels is a senior economics correspondent at TIME. She covers work, consumer spending, retail, gender, and technology. She is a four-time finalist for the Gerald Loeb Award for Distinguished Business and Financial Journalism, and she has won awards from the Society of Business Editors and Writers and the Los Angeles Press Club.



Mere hours after birth, most newborns are tested for two things: whether they have signs of hearing loss and whether they have any of a range of rare conditions that could severely impact their health and their lives.

If they test positive for either, they qualify for a number of interventions that can dramatically improve their prospects over their lifetime.

But both tests could soon undergo dramatic changes because of drastic cutbacks at federal health agencies that public-health advocates say imperil both programs. These cutbacks could mean that certain states will not test for and respond to conditions that currently set services into motion in every state.

“There are a lot of worthy causes that fall by the wayside when there isn’t some kind of centralized government support,” says Karl White, director of the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management at Utah State University.

The dismantling of a critical division

The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program (EHDI) is run partially out of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program helps states coordinate newborn hearing screening and respond to infants who fail the hearing tests. It falls under the CDC’s Disability and Health Promotion branch.

But this entire branch was eliminated in the April 1 cutbacks at CDC that slashed about 2,400 employees. EHDI had eight full-time workers and one fellow; all but one were eliminated in the cutbacks, according to current and former staff.

EHDI worked with states to analyze data to help communities follow up with families so that babies born deaf or hard of hearing get support as early as possible.

States apply for funding grants under EHDI. They submitted the applications to the CDC in January, and now the applications are sitting there with no one left to review them, White says. “There are real questions about what’s going to happen,” he says, “and whether that money is going to be available.”

Read More: [IVF Patients Say a Test Caused Them to Discard Embryos. Now They’re Suing.](#)

Newborn hearing screenings are a true public-health success story. Hospitals did not start screening children for hearing loss at birth until the 1990s; it wasn't until 2000 that screening was nearly universal across states. Children's lives can be changed dramatically by early screening and response. In the 1970s and 1980s, children weren't diagnosed with profound hearing loss until they were 2 or 3 years old, which hampered their ability to read and write, White says. Now, children are screened at birth, and early interventions can help them meet more of these milestones.

Thanks in part to federal funding for newborn hearing screening, about 98% of newborns are screened for hearing loss before they leave the hospital, [according to the CDC](#). This won't change immediately, says Donna Smiley, the chief staff officer for audiology at the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

That's because some EHDI funding is still administered through the Health Services Resources Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that was less affected by cuts.

But the HRSA funding relies on EHDI data, and it will be impossible to know where problems lie and where to send money. Eventually, state programs that rely on CDC data analysis will dissolve, Smiley says. The CDC especially helps with follow-ups when children are found to be deaf or hard of hearing.

"If babies are going to be screened but there's not any follow-up, that's going to be a wasted screening," says Smiley.

White agrees that without CDC's EHDI funding, some state hearing screening programs could collapse. According to a survey conducted by his organization in early 2024, 18 states said that their EHDI programs would be discontinued if federal money disappeared. About 37 states said the absence of federal funding "would have a major negative impact." Though some hearing testing may continue through hospitals, there would be a gap in the coordinated response and interventions for affected babies.

"The thing I am most worried about is that money that Congress has specifically appropriated to support and expand and improve EHDI is in

danger of not being allocated,” he says. In 2022, Congress passed and President Biden signed the [Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act](#) that reauthorized EHDI program funding until 2027. It sought to improve and expand EHDI programs.

“If it can happen to USAID and FEMA—if contracts to Columbia and Harvard and other places can just be canceled—I think there’s reason to be concerned,” White says.

In a statement provided to TIME about newborn hearing screenings, an HHS spokesperson said that early childhood and newborn screening programs were being consolidated into the new Administration for a Healthy America (AHA) and the CDC to “improve efficiency and better address public health needs.” The reorganization, the statement says, is aiming to “streamline operations, maximize resources, and support key priorities like early childhood health and disease prevention efforts.”

A crucial rare-disease screening committee was disbanded

In their first days of life, babies also are tested, often with a heel prick, for a host of rare diseases that respond to early intervention. These tests can change a child’s life. Exactly which conditions they are tested for varies from state to state; Pennsylvania tests for 38 rare diseases, while Alaska only tests for 32, according to the National Organization for Rare Disorders, an advocacy group.

State testing has become more uniform over the last 15 years because of something called the Recommended Uniform Screening Panel, which recommends which diseases states include in their testing panel. The HHS Secretary decides what diseases are added to the list each year—usually adding one or two based on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Heritable Disorders in Newborns and Children. This committee decides to add new diseases if there is a screening test that can be used at population scale and if a treatment or intervention is available.

“In a remarkable feat of health policy, we created this committee that used evidence to decide what we should screen for,” says one HHS staffer not authorized to speak to the media.

Though the advisory committee is made up almost entirely of volunteers—meaning it didn’t cost the government much money—it was disbanded by the Trump Administration on April 3, says a spokesperson for the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

Read More: [Why It’s So Hard to Have Your Fertility Tested](#)

The advisory committee was set to vote on May 9 whether to recommend adding two rare genetic diseases to the panel: metachromatic leukodystrophy (MLD) and Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Now, the advocates who spent years advocating for those diseases to be added have no remedy.

“The longer it’s delayed before these conditions are screened at the state level, the more children are potentially born with these conditions and don’t get the opportunity to be identified and access care,” says Allison Herrity, senior policy analyst at the National Organization for Rare Disorders.

Screening for disorders is essential because in the last few years, treatments such as gene therapy have become available to treat children early in life, Herrity says.

Lesa Brackbill knows the horrible heartbreak that can occur when a baby is born in a state that does not screen for their rare genetic disease. Her daughter Victoria was born in 2014 and seemed healthy, but at five months old, she started becoming “a completely different baby,” Brackbill says. Victoria became irritable, couldn’t keep her food down, and stopped smiling.

After an MRI, CT scan, and a genetic test, Victoria was diagnosed with Krabbe disease, a rare disorder that affects the central and peripheral nervous systems. Though there is a treatment, it was too late to intervene; she died the next year. Pennsylvania did not, at the time, screen for Krabbe at birth, although neighboring New York did. Had Pennsylvania screened

for the disease, Victoria would have been able to get stem cell therapy that would have stopped the disease's progression, Brackbill says.

"We were given a diagnosis with despair," she says. "Newborn screening gives diagnosis with hope."

Brackbill lobbied for the advisory committee to add Krabbe disease, which it did in 2024; now 12 states, including Pennsylvania, screen for the disease, and more are in the process of adding it. But Brackbill is now worried that the advisory committee has been dissolved and that screenings won't evolve, but go backward.

"Without the ability to add conditions, the list is going to remain stagnant," she says. "What good is a treatment if no one can access it?"

An essential screening for mothers may disappear

Advocates worry that the health and wellbeing of mothers—not just babies—during and after pregnancy could worsen because of the Trump Administration's cuts to HHS. Since 1987, the federal government has conducted a study called PRAMS—the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System—that asks women about their experiences before, during, and after pregnancy.

About 18 dedicated staff at PRAMS collected and analyzed the data that came in from states, using it to improve mother and infant health. It's the only national data collection system with comprehensive information on mothers' experiences.

In New Jersey, for example, PRAMS data showed that the [mortality rate among Black infants](#) was more than three times that of white infants.

PRAMS further analyzed the data to look at the timing of prenatal care and barriers to postpartum care. It found that Black women also had low rates of postpartum checkups and breastfeeding initiation. Starting in 2018, New Jersey approved \$4.7 million a year to community organizations to try to reduce infant mortality and increase postpartum checkups and other interactions with health care.

Read More: [Pregnancy-Related U.S. Death Rates Have Jumped in Recent Years](#)

But all of the PRAMS staff were laid off in the April 1 reduction in force, according to current and former employees. Now, no one is left to collect the data, analyze it, or share insights with states to improve mother and child outcomes.

Former staff say they don't understand how the Administration can throw away decades worth of data that helped improve women and children's lives, especially since Trump has said he would be the "fertilization president."

"This is completely counter to the current administration's goals of wanting to emphasize the alarming declining birth rates and high mortality rates," said one laid-off PRAMS worker, who wished to remain anonymous because he is on administrative leave and receiving a salary until June, to TIME. "Cutting this team and program is directly contrary to their goals of trying to emphasize a pro-family culture—even a pro-life culture."

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Elissa Slotkin: How Democrats Can Go on Offense Against Trump

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



Elissa Slotkin knows something about strategy. The Michigan senator formerly worked for George W. Bush's National Security Council and Barack Obama's State Department and Department of Defense before first winning a Michigan congressional seat in 2018. Last year, her Senate victory was one of few bright spots for Democrats. Now, Slotkin is

applying her strategic thinking to puzzling through how Democrats can best fight Donald Trump.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Do Democrats have a plan for countering Trump? And what is it?

I don't think it's a secret that Democrats have been on their heels since Trump was elected. And I come from the national-security world, so what I constantly am looking for is a strong, comprehensive strategy in whatever I'm doing, but certainly to counter Trump. It can't be kind of reacting every single day to every single thing that he does.

What do you think the plan should be?

I think that most Americans who voted for President Trump voted for him because they wanted more money in their pockets. They did not vote for chaos. They did not vote for the instability that he's created. They didn't vote for cuts to veterans. They didn't vote for will-he-won't-he on tariffs. Certainly in my state, it was an economic security vote. We need to spend time clearly articulating that he is gonna make you pay in every corner of your life.

Trump voters come up to me and say, "I voted for change. I didn't vote for a yo-yo on tariffs." I just came from the Flint engine plant and a huge number of the parts that are going into the GM trucks that are made at that plant are produced in Canada. You could have a part go up by 300% in cost if it's tariffed on both sides of the border. And people understand that here.

People may be okay in theory with some of the DOGE cuts, but they certainly understand their family budget, and they understand what they're spending on groceries. They understand there's no plan for their mortgage or for their rent. They understand that the tariffs could cost them money. They understand that their Medicaid, their Medicare, their Social Security, their VA benefits are being looked at as a potential area to cut. A lead foot in whatever we do has to be pushing back on the complete fallacy that he's

gonna save you money. He's going to cost you money. He may create a self-inflicted recession.

Some other Democrats are arguing that [Senate Minority Leader Chuck] Schumer doesn't have what it takes to counter Trump and that the party needs new leadership in the Senate. What do you think about that?

Well, Schumer is our leader. It's a very tough job. There are very intense debates within the Democrats right now. So it is not an easy cakewalk to be leader.

Democrats in general need to have more comprehensive strategies. We need to be on the same page and speak from the same sheet of music if we want to be effective. I have not been shy about saying that to him and lots of other senior leaders in the party. It's on all of us to buckle down and come up with a strategy, that we can share amongst ourselves, but also communicate to Democrats who are asking us to meet the moment.

Do you feel like the party isn't meeting the moment right now?

I think that Trump is very effectively flooding the zone. I think that he has people on their heels. People don't know where to look first on any given day. I think that we have a general approach of legislation, litigation, communication, and elections, focusing on those four buckets. But I think the moment demands more than that.

As a Midwesterner who won on the same ballot as Trump, I'm going to be banging pots and pans about the economic message over and over and over again, because I think in general, as a party, we've drifted away from a central focus on the economy and on families, and that to me is an essential center of gravity.

You've said that you're focused on making moves that are both strategic and irreversible. Can you tell me about what those might be?

I'm a national-security person, so I made a quad chart. The top axis is tactical and strategic: when Trump announces something, is it tactical

(meaning short term) or is it strategic (long term)? And then on the other axis of the quad chart: is it reversible or irreversible? Can a new president or a new Congress come in and reverse his bad choice, or is it permanent? And I decided to work on the issues that fell into the quadrant that was both strategic and irreversible.

Many of those things are constitutional, they are about our rights and our democracy, but they're also about the long-term economic viability of my state. We know what it's like here to live through a recession. In 2008, 2009, 2010, our recession was pretty close to a depression in Michigan. And I'm not gonna stand silent while he threatens that in my state.

If you had a magic wand and could remake the party to be able to win again in places like Michigan, how does the party need to change?

I think we need to get back to the fundamentals. The middle class is an absolutely essential part of American life. We need to grow and expand it. And we need to focus on the three big things that most Americans can agree on, which is strong economic security, strong national security, and strong democracy.

I come from a world of war planning, a world of constant, prudent planning. I come from a world where you can't just play defense only. There's no such thing as winning, in any operation or in any war, by just playing defense. What we owe the country is a strategy that does more than play defense.

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How America Became Afraid of the Other

Nguyễn was born in Vietnam and raised in America. His novel [*The Sympathizer*](#) won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, as well as five other awards. His latest book is [*To Save and to Destroy: Writing as an Other*](#)



The United States has always had a tricky relationship with immigrants and refugees, even if part of the American mythology is that we are a land of newcomers. In this mythology, they—migrants—are a part of us. At the same time, the United States has also gone through periodic spasms of intense anti-immigrant feeling.

So it is now, with the [Trump Administration](#) weaponizing the fear of the other and promoting a moral panic about strangers coming to our shores. When these people, including those who are also Americans, become seen

as a threat to the nation, they are no longer a part of us. Instead, they become the other to our collective self as a country.

This is not new. In the late 1800s, many Americans believed that Chinese immigrants brought disease, crime, and vice, along with an inhuman work ethic. The result was the burning of Chinatowns, the lynching of Chinese immigrants, and the banning of most Chinese immigration. With his tariffs, President Donald Trump may be targeting the Chinese even more explicitly than when he characterized COVID-19 as the “kung flu,” but he did campaign on sealing American borders to protect the nation against Mexican “rapists” in 2015 and alleged Venezuelan gangsters in 2024. His promised deportation campaign recalls the 1920s and 1930s when the government indiscriminately rounded up roughly 1 million [Mexicans and Mexican American citizens](#) and dispatched them to Mexico.

Punishing this other takes the form of theater and spectacle, meant to entertain and satisfy some while silencing and disciplining the rest. Thus, renditioning alleged Venezuelan gangsters to [El Salvador](#) on flights operated by ICE is flaunted before cameras that record them as subhuman, heads shaved bald, anonymous, and humiliated in infantilizing uniforms of white shirts and shorts.

Read More: [What the Venezuelans Deported to El Salvador Experienced](#)

Renditioning is a more appropriate word than deportation, since many people are being returned not to their country of origin but to somewhere else, like the migrants of many nationalities who ended up confined in a hotel and jungle camp in [Panama](#). Renditioning also evokes the practice inflicted by the CIA on suspected terrorists vanished into so-called black sites, which suits how Trump invoked the [Alien Enemies Act](#) of 1798, a wartime authority last used to intern Japanese immigrants and Japanese American citizens in World War II, to describe alleged Venezuelan gangsters as “terrorists” who are “infiltrating” the United States. (Though, federal judges in both New York and Texas have challenged this action in the court system.)

Presidents and states describing alleged criminals as terrorists should frighten us all because “terrorist” is a name of infinite flexibility that can be

applied to anyone whom the state says is subverting it. What is worse is that a “War on Terror,” such as the one President George W. Bush declared in the wake of 9/11, can never be won. It is a state of permanent war, inflicted on an unending parade of others while also enforcing domestic conformity in a bipolar world, which Bush signaled when he said, “You’re either with us or against us.”

While it may be possible to win a war against a particular set of enemies, how does one defeat terror? The threat of terror continues because terror has existed as long as curiosity and fear, love and hate, light and dark—as long as the human heart has beat. Communism, or any other ideology the administration in power doesn’t agree with, might be defeated—but the terrorist never can, since terror is an unending wellspring, embodied by actual threats but also coming from within us and giving birth to ever-new demons.

The War on Terror might have resonated with Americans because terror has been a part of American life since the first European settlers came to these shores. Perhaps the first terrifying others for these settlers were the Indigenous peoples, followed by the kidnapped and enslaved Africans whose labor and bodies made the United States possible. Or perhaps the first other for the settlers was the vast land itself, promising bounty and threatening disaster. That is still true today, as those invested in fossil fuels promise that the land can be dominated and rendered profitable, just as the particular others who worked the land, from enslaved people to migrant laborers, could be exploited.

Whether it was through other humans or the land, the settlers had encountered what the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas called [the face of the Other](#), which Levinas argued could elicit feelings of compassion or terror. These polar opposite reactions continue to define our American political and cultural landscape. As some call for empathy for others, the Trump Administration characterizes these gestures as part of a “diversity, equity, inclusion” ideology that must be destroyed. Whereas Levinas thought the face-to-face encounter with one’s other was a crucial ethical task, Elon Musk [believes](#) that the “fundamental weakness of Western civilization is

empathy,” opening it up to be taken over by non-Western and nonwhite people. It is no coincidence that those sent to El Salvador’s prison are paraded with their heads forcibly bowed. We are not allowed to see their very human faces.

It is not simply gangsters who are terrorists in the imagination that fear the other, it is refugees and immigrants, documented and undocumented, who are said to be seeking to replace white people. To protect themselves from the threat of expulsion, migrants are expected to profess uncompromising loyalty. Their difference from the norms of the nation—white, male, heterosexual, Christian—seemingly precludes them from the right to dissent that is supposed to be a part of Americanism. Thus, all of the international students who have so far been arrested and detained incommunicado for protesting what they argue is Israel’s genocidal attack on Gaza are nonwhite, with origins in countries like Syria, Turkey, and South Korea.

Whether or not one agrees with their speech, they, too, have free-speech rights as permanent legal residents and international students, protected by the [U.S. Constitution](#). But it’s worth asking how much separates a citizen, especially a nonwhite one or a naturalized one, from Columbia-graduate Mahmoud Khalil, who is a permanent legal resident—or Tufts graduate student Rümeysa Öztürk, an international student, arrested by masked ICE officers who barely deign to show identification or badges. An erosion of those rights can be extended to citizens as well. As the line between arresting and kidnapping, official police and secret police, is blurred, we—citizen or noncitizen—are meant to be intimidated. We are meant to submit to power, to any masked person saying they are the law, just as the Venezuelans dispatched to El Salvador are meant to crouch before menacing, masked, armored guards.

Read More: [*Can a U.S. Citizen Be Deported? Trump’s Comments Raise Legal Alarms*](#)

Domestically, the mechanisms of deportation or the state punishing its enemies are unlikely to stop with Venezuelans or advocates of a Palestinian state, since the mechanism of power is based on paranoia, with one threat metastasizing and expanding. The Trump Administration’s crusade against

pro-Palestinian students, for example, is enmeshed with its argument that it is defending Jewish people on and off campuses. But this is a [weaponization of antisemitism](#), turning a very real racism into a tool to advance a political agenda whereby Palestinians become the new others, temporarily replacing Jewish people as perpetual others.

Punishing assorted others quells empathy and dissent, for we do not want to be targeted ourselves. Hence the sight of those who might be considered other turning against those already marked as others, as in the case of documented immigrants condoning the deportation of undocumented immigrants.

This goes deeper than paranoia precisely because this is a classic divide-and-conquer political strategy, illustrated by the Trump Administration methodically attacking university after university, law firm after law firm, immigrant group after immigrant group, individual after individual. Each hopes to be spared by the figurative firing squad, but predictably, none will be. The lesson to be learned is that we are not safer by sacrificing others. Authoritarian power will not be satisfied with one sacrifice or one enemy or one other but will require more, since that power thrives on the spectacle of punishment—the rendition. Each punishment further diminishes the ability of everyone else to resist that power. Meanwhile, the more power that authoritarianism accrues in its willingness to break any rule or law, the less power there is in those rules and laws to protect us.

The solution to such an approach has always been the same but bears repeating: unity is our only hope, solidarity our primary strategy. We must refuse to be divided, even as we are offered the temptation of sacrificing others, or the bargain of giving up one right after another in the hopes of securing safety from unending terror. We are at a moment now where Trump is [pursuing the idea of eroding, even ending, birthright citizenship](#), with the idea of [sending “homegrown” Americans](#) to El Salvador’s prisons. His Administration is also seeking an expansion of a for-profit immigrant detention system, with a [budget of \\$45 billion](#). When do detention camps become concentration camps, which is what Franklin Delano Roosevelt initially called the places where Japanese Americans were interned? At what point will enough of us say enough?

What might destroy our society is not immigrants or refugees or Palestinians or women seeking abortions or trans people or any of the other assorted others that have been posited as undermining American society. What might destroy us is our own fear, not just of the other who is a neighbor and a stranger but also of ourselves, of that black hole of abiding mysteries within us that so many of us cannot solve on our own.

What might help us overcome that fear and terror is not to banish others but to keep company with them, to speak with them, to meet them face to face.

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Meme-ing the Faith: Pope Francis' Most Memorable Social Media Moments

Waxman is a staff writer at TIME in the Entertainment section. She also covers all things History.



Pope Francis, who [died on April 21 at the age of 88](#), knew how to preach in the social media era.

He kept up with the latest apps, seeing them as opportunities to reach Catholics wherever they are. Though he stopped watching television in 1990, he joined [Instagram](#) in 2016, setting a record with 1.4 million followers in less than 12 hours. In the final days of his life, he was on weekly WhatsApp and video calls with a parish in the war zone of [Gaza](#).

Young Catholics found him relatable, and it helped that the leader of the largest Christian church was also a fan of the world's most-watched sport, soccer. He grew up rooting for the club San Lorenzo from his native Buenos Aires and met with legendary Argentine players [Lionel Messi](#) and Diego Maradona.

[Buy a copy of the Pope Francis cover here](#)

Though his days as nightclub bouncer (true) ended decades ago, he knew how to party. Tango, he said in 2010, "comes from deep within me." In 2014, hundreds of couples [danced](#) it in St. Peter's Square, in a show of appreciation for him.

[video id=V0uEvr1Q autostart="viewable"]

As with other newly anointed celebrities, it took Francis a while to get used to being in the spotlight. "The only thing I would like is to go out one day, without being recognized, and go to a pizzeria for a [pizza](#)," he told an interviewer in 2015. So the Pope ordered in; in 2017, he blew out a candle on a [13-ft.-long](#) mozzarella and tomato pie for his 81st birthday.

The only thing he loved more than pizza was sweets. Friends from Argentina would bring him [alfajores](#), Argentine cookies filled with caramel and covered in chocolate. In February 2014, he posed with a life-size chocolate statue of himself, a gift made out of [1.5 tons of cocoa](#). His go-to caffeinated drink was maté, and he would accept a cup whenever one was offered on a rope line.

What social media users ate up were his photo ops. True to his eponym St. Francis of Assisi's love of animals, and his role as shepherd of more than 1 billion Catholics, he went viral in 2018 posing with a [baby lamb](#) around his neck at a live nativity scene.

After homilies, Francis was always game to pose for selfies, especially with teens. And though he once described the Internet as "[a gift from God](#)," he also worried that the social media platforms designed to keep people connected were making them more isolated, stating in 2018, "The world of

virtual communication is a good thing, but when it becomes alienating, it makes you forget to shake hands.” It’s a lesson that can apply to adults too.

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How a New Pope Is Chosen—and Who It Could Be

Burga is a general assignment reporter at TIME. She covers U.S. news with a focus on student loans and LGBTQ+ issues.

De Guzman is a reporter at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. He covers the Asia-Pacific region and global overnight news.

Jeyaretnam is an editorial fellow at TIME, based in the Singapore bureau. She covers general news around the world.

Shah is a reporter at TIME.



Pope Francis passed away at age 88 on April 21, just a day after an Easter Sunday appearance at St. Peter's Square, where he gave well-wishes to

thousands of Catholic supporters. The Vatican said Monday that Francis died after a stroke.

Born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Francis was elected Pope in 2013 after his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI became the first Pope to resign in about 600 years. Francis, chosen as [TIME's 2013 Person of the Year](#), became the first Latin American pontiff when he took the reins of the religious institution. Over his term, Francis became known for his humility and calls for peace during major global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the [Gaza humanitarian crisis](#).

Read More: [Pope Francis, the ‘World’s Parish Priest’ Who Led in an Era of Crisis, Dies at 88](#)

As the world [mourns Francis and commemorates his life’s legacy](#), his death also kickstarts a leadership transition period at the Vatican known as the interregnum, during which there is no Pope in power (referred to as *sede vacante*, or the “vacant seat”).

[Buy a copy of the Pope Francis cover here](#)

Here’s what to know about how the next Pope will be selected—and who some of the frontrunners are.

What happens when a Pope dies?

After the Pope dies, the Vatican’s traditional nine days of mourning called the *novendiales* begin.

The election of a new Pope begins between 15 to 20 days after the death. The camerlengo, a cardinal in the Catholic Church, is in charge of organizing the election in a process known as the conclave, which was recently dramatized in the award-winning 2024 film [Conclave](#).

Read More: [In the Vatican Movie Conclave, Big Secrets Are Revealed. Here Are Three Real Life Papal Conclaves Marked by Controversy](#)

The actual election, however, is preceded by general congregations that are called both to [discuss the growing challenges](#) facing the Catholic Church. The general congregations must be attended by all cardinals who “are not legitimately impeded,” [according to the Apostolic Constitution](#).

Cardinals are special bishops and other Vatican officials who serve as the Pope’s counselors and visually distinguish themselves with a red cloak. There are more than 250 total cardinals, all of whom are men and most of whom come from Europe, [according to the Vatican](#). While all cardinals can participate in the daily meetings that occur prior to the election, [only 120 cardinals](#)—all of whom have to be under the age of 80—can actually vote in the conclave. It is not clear how the 120 voters are selected.

In December, Francis appointed 21 new Cardinals, hailing from six different continents and many of whom reflect more modern and progressive ideals, such as support for inclusivity of LGBTQ+ Catholics, [according to NPR](#). Overall, it is believed that Francis will have personally selected about 80% of those who will choose his successor.

Read More: [*Did Pope Francis ‘Pack’ the Conclave?*](#)

Typically, the electorate holds a mass to ask for spiritual guidance before the papal election takes place, [according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) (USCCB).

How does the voting process work?

At the Vatican, the electors stay in the Domus Sanctae Marthae. It’s where Francis chose to live, in a two-room suite, rather than the posh papal apartments of the Apostolic Palace. Typically, the electorate begins its work with a mass to ask for spiritual guidance, according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The conclave is an act of supreme secrecy. Vatican City becomes extremely regulated, as cardinals are not permitted to communicate with anyone “outside the area where the election is taking place, except in cases of proven and urgent necessity,” per the [Apostolic Constitution](#). Following the

funeral rites and mass for a deceased Pope, the electors then process to the Sistine Chapel, where they take an oath of discretion, and close the doors to the public.

Electors all vote secretly via ballots that read *in summum pontificem*, or “I elect as supreme pontiff.” The twice-folded ballots are placed in urns and counted by three cardinals chosen by a random draw from the electors to be scrutineers. Votes are then recorded and read aloud to all cardinals present. The process continues until a candidate receives two-thirds of the vote, per USCCB.

The process is governed by the Vatican constitution known in Latin as *Universi Dominici Gregis*, or “the Lord’s whole flock.” First issued by St. John Paul II in 1996, it used to allow for a new pope to be elected by a simple majority—rather than two-thirds—after 33 rounds of ballots starting on the second day of the conclave. But it was amended by Benedict XVI to remove the provision in 2007. Instead, a long-drawn conclave would be decided by a runoff between the top two candidates (that excludes the two candidates from voting) until one receives a two-thirds majority.

The public is kept abreast of the voting process through smoke signals created by the burning of ballots. White smoke means that cardinals have selected a new Pope, while black smoke means another round of voting has to take place.

Once the conclave elects a Pope, the dean of the College of Cardinals—currently, Italian Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re—asks him if he accepts the title, and the candidate is dressed and picks his papal name before he walks out to the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica. There, the senior cardinal deacon—who at the time of Francis’ death was French Cardinal Dominique Mamberti—tells the crowd assembled below, “Habemus Papam,” (Latin for “we have a Pope”) and introduces the Church’s new leader by the name he has chosen.

Choosing a New Pope

When a Pope dies or resigns, a new Pope is selected by a group of cardinals in a process called a Papal Conclave

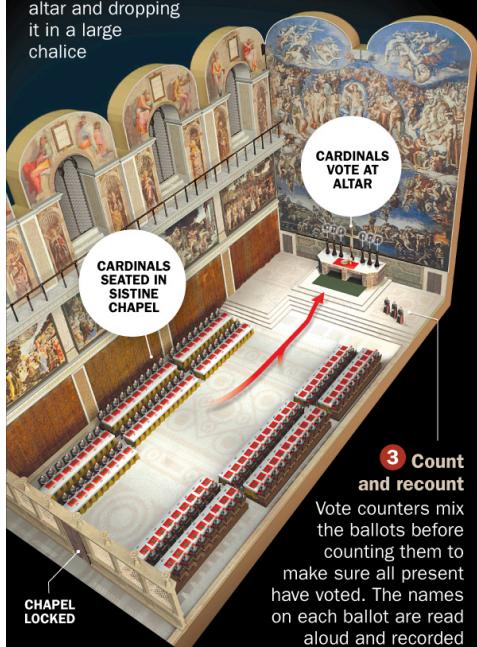
1 Cardinal gathering

All cardinals under 80-years old gather at the Vatican in Rome to prepare for the conclave. They swear an oath of secrecy



2 Inside the Sistine Chapel

Each cardinal votes in secret, putting their choice for Pope on a paper ballot and carrying it to the altar and dropping it in a large chalice



3 Count and recount

Vote counters mix the ballots before counting them to make sure all present have voted. The names on each ballot are read aloud and recorded

4 Search for agreement

One round of voting is allowed on the first day. Voting continues, up to four times a day, until a candidate receives two-thirds of the votes

5 Signaling the world

The cardinals' ballots are burned in the Sistine fireplace after each round of voting:

Black smoke
indicates no choice; the color comes from straw or chemicals

White smoke
means, "We have a Pope" and bells ring to confirm

6 The new Pope

When a candidate receives enough votes to win and he consents to the job, he is the Pope. He then declares his papal name



Who is eligible to become the next Pope?

The College of Cardinal's Report, a website aimed at providing more information on potential successors, has [identified](#) 22 cardinals who it believes are "papabili," or most likely to be elected Pope. Some of the qualities a cardinal considered papabili should possess include humility, zeal for the Catholic faith, and the promotion of goodness, according to the report. "But predicting the next Pope is notoriously precarious and he may be none of those we propose," it caveats. Pope Francis, for example, was not on many papabili lists in 2013, because many considered him to be too old.

Despite calls for greater leadership opportunities for women within the Catholic Church during last year's synod, a summit among Catholic leaders, women are still ineligible to be ordained as priests and therefore are also ineligible for the papacy.

While not explicitly outlined in any specific Church regulations, every Pope has had the status of a cardinal before they took their role as pontiff.

Here are some of the most discussed candidates who may be considered to be the next Pope:

Jean-Marc Aveline

Jean-Marc Aveline, 66, is well-known for his support for migrants. That stance is personal, as the cardinal himself fled his home due to war when he was just four years old. His family eventually settled in Marseille, France, a city with a substantial Muslim population, making him keen to interfaith dialogues. Aveline has a doctorate in theology. He is reportedly Pope Francis' "favorite" possible successor, according to the [College of Cardinals Report](#), though he differs from Francis in that he expressed caution at [blessings for same-sex couples](#), as opposed to individuals.

Joseph Tobin

Joseph Tobin, 72, is a highly progressive candidate for the Church and has amassed substantial influence in the U.S. Tobin has [voiced avid support](#) for LGBTQ+ Catholics, women in the Church, and migrants, even going against then-Indiana Gov. Mike Pence over the politician's efforts to stop the resettlement of Syrian refugees. He previously worked in the role of a second-in-command of the Vatican office before his current role as the Archbishop of Newark, New Jersey. In that position, he's dealt with the high-profile Theodore McCarrick sexual assault scandal.

Juan Jose Omella

Juan Jose Omella, 79, worked as an advisor to Pope Francis prior to his passing. The Spanish cardinal earned his red cloak just one year after he was given the title of archbishop. He has spoken strongly against abortion, but has made controversial comments regarding reports of sexual abuse within the Catholic Chruch in Spain, [calling the estimated figures](#) that fell in the hundreds of thousands "lies." He followed that by saying that "We will not tire of asking for forgiveness from the victims and working for their healing." Omella studied theology and philosophy at the Seminary of Zaragoza.

Pietro Parolin

Italian Pietro Parolin, 70, has been serving as the Vatican's Secretary of State since 2013 and is the highest-ranking cardinal in the electing conclave. He is considered an expert on a number of geo-political issues. From 2002 to 2009, he was undersecretary of state for Relations with States and directed relations with Vietnam, North Korea, Israel, and China.

Péter Erdő

Péter Erdő, 72, would be a more conservative pick for the top post. In 2003, at 51, the Hungarian national was made one of the Church's youngest cardinals after being appointed by John Paul II. He has opposed divorced and remarried individuals taking communion, believing that marriage is indissoluble, and is against same-sex marriage. His stance on immigration, a key issue in Hungary, has also come under fire in the past: he once

[compared](#) taking in refugees to human smuggling, but is said to have changed his stance after a meeting with Pope Francis, who was much more liberal on issues of immigration and refugees.

Peter Turkson

Peter Turkson, 76, would be a progressive pick for the Church. Turkson, an archbishop from Ghana, was first named cardinal by Pope John Paul II in 2003. Turkson was selected by Pope Francis to help lead special assemblies advocating for development in the pan-Amazon region, and a council for justice and peace. In March, the University of Dayton [announced](#) that Turkson would be receiving an honorary doctorate this year, calling him a “tireless advocate for the poor and marginalized, championing the cause of human dignity.” At least six other colleges have also recognized him with an honorary doctorate.

Luis Antonio Tagle

If elected, Luis Antonio Tagle, 67, of the Philippines, would be the first modern-day Asian Pope. Currently serving as pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Tagle is more left-leaning, having spoken out against the isolating impact of the Church’s harsh language against same-sex marriage.

“Yes, I think even the language has changed already, the harsh words that were used in the past to refer to gays and divorced and separated people, the unwed mothers etc, in the past they were quite severe,” he [said](#) in 2015. “Many people who belonged to those groups were branded and that led to their isolation from the wider society.

Mario Grech

Mario Grech, 68, is the secretary general of the Synod. The Malta-born cardinal has expressed his disapproval of divorce and in vitro fertilization, but in the same breath called on the Catholic church to accept divorced and gay couples. The Church should be “an experience of God” instead of a “moral agency” he [told](#) the *Sunday Times* of Malta in a 2015 interview.

Under his current role in the church, Grech was in charge of overseeing the Synod of Synodality—when religious leaders gather to consult on the future direction of the Church—making him well-connected among bishops and cardinals. He has been outspoken in his support of migrants, calling on Europe to better address the humanitarian issue at-hand. He added: “It is also important in such a delicate sector not to allow institutional discrimination between the well-off foreigners and the poor, those coming from the East and those coming from Africa.”

Matteo Maria Zuppi

Italian Matteo Maria Zuppi, 69, has taken the lead from Francis in his attempts to foster a more inclusive environment within the church. He served as special envoy to Russia and Ukraine, and has engaged in dialogue with leaders in Kyiv, Moscow, Washington D.C., the West Bank, and Beijing.

He has been open about his acceptance of homosexuality and is also supportive of prisoners rights and the abolition of the death penalty, and in June 2023 he called for a “legal system that guarantees protection and welcome for all.”

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Pope Francis' Greatest Achievement Was Emphasizing Mercy

Austen Ivereigh is a British writer and journalist known for his two biographies of Pope Francis, as well a bestselling book written in collaboration with him: *Let Us Dream: The Path to a Better Future* (Simon & Schuster, 2020). His most recent book is *First Belong to God: On Retreat with Pope Francis* (Loyola Press) to which Pope Francis wrote the foreword.



When they gather in Rome to consider Pope Francis' successor, the world's cardinals will sift his legacy, asking which of the key priorities of his pontificate should be defended and built on, or whether a new emphasis is needed. Much of the media coverage will portray the decision as a contest

between competing visions: one, “liberal,” reforming, modernizing and compassionate; the other “conservative,” seeking to preserve tradition, teach with clarity, and defend law and morality. Yet most cardinals do not look through that lens, and nor did Francis. They do not see truth and mercy as rivals, that more of one vision means less of the other, but that truth and mercy must be held together, as a Gospel imperative. Francis’ legacy was his insistence on this, and the way he showed how the Church can have a radical emphasis on mercy.

He is not the first Pope to seek to recover the place of God’s mercy in the Church’s proclamation. All of the past three Popes—John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis—were convinced that the Church has too often emphasized the proclamation of truth and doctrine without at the same time showing that mercy is the way that God interacts with us. Benedict XVI insisted that the recovery of mercy was the great line of continuity between his and his predecessor’s pontificates and that of Francis.

What truly made Francis different from his predecessors was the bold, radical way he sought to put mercy—“God’s style”, he called it—at the heart of all the Church teaches and does, and the way he modeled that conversion in his exercise of the papal ministry. There was an urgency in this reform. Long before being made Pope, Francis understood that we are living through what he called a “change of era,” in which faith is no longer primarily inherited through law, culture, and tribal identity, but is the fruit of an encounter with mercy, which opens the door to faith. This is the “new” way in which the Church evangelizes, but it is only new compared to the past centuries. In the apostolic age, the first millennium of Christianity, when the Church did not yet have the backing of law and culture and strong institutionsChristianity spread rapidly across the ancient world. Francis, like many of the Catholic thinkers of his time, saw we were returning to such an age. In one book of the 1960s that influenced him, *Power and Poverty in the Church*, Yves Congar foresaw a return to a “pre-Constantinian situation in a pagan world,” and said it would require the Church to embrace “wholly evangelical ways of exercising authority in the new world in which God calls us to serve him.” In his humility, directness, and closeness, Francis has taught this kind of authority better than anyone. And he did so by forefronting mercy.

When Americans hear the word “mercy” they often think of an exemption from the application of the law—an act of compassion. They may even think of mercy as “being soft”—and suspect that too many such exemptions undermine the law. But for the Church, mercy is closer to the Latin word *misericordia*: it is to have a heart for those who suffer. When Francis early on spoke of the Church as a battlefield hospital, this is what he meant: a place of salvation and healing that begins with attentiveness to the individual, an attention that honors the dignity of each of us, an attention that we do not deserve or merit by our actions, but which flows from God’s love for his creatures. True mercy does not mean a downgrading of morality or law. It means that morality and law are not enough. Jesus came not to announce a new code of righteousness, but to show a new way of being, one that reflects God’s way of acting with us.

The Church’s task is no longer these days that of the lawmaker, laying down is right and good. Today’s task is to help people to live fruitfully and well, by depending on God’s grace as well as moral codes. “We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond and giving meaning to marital life,” Francis notes in *Amoris Laetitia*, his 2016 document on the family. He saw that it was no longer enough to say marriage is for life; but rather that in a culture where transitory relationships and divorce are the norm, the Church must support people to marry for life. *Amoris Laetitia* (“The Joy of Love”) is about equipping the Church to do just that. The Church is called “to form consciences, not to replace them,” said Francis.

From his election as Pope in 2013, Francis sought to reform by helping the Church develop its “heart for the poor,” its capacity for listening and accompanying, for sensing need and responding. In Latin America, they called this “pastoral and missionary conversion.” Francis dedicated a special jubilee to teaching the mindset—he labeled 2016 “the Year of Mercy”—and in the same year *Amoris Laetitia* showed how to put mercy into practice when dealing with marriage and divorce. Francis preached that you can both uphold the law of Catholic teachings *and* give people the space to grow in their capacity to live them. But he gave his best single insight into the conversion towards the end of his pontificate, in October

2024, when he released a document called *Dilexit Nos* (“He Loved Us”) on the devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus.

In this document, Francis showed that the heart in the biblical and Christian tradition is not merely the place of feeling and emotion, but the truest and deepest center of us, beyond roles and projections. The heart, according to Francis, is the center from which we open out to bond with God, with others, and with creation. The heart is where we ponder and discern, learning to hear God’s voice above the din of the world. *Dilexit Nos* asked us to “return to the heart” and that’s as good a summary of Francis’ pontificate as it gets.

Not only in *Dilexit* but in his preaching Francis constantly offered Jesus’s own way of interacting with others as the model of God’s style: seeking people out, asking what he can do for them, staying close to them, never hectoring but helping them to grow and change. It is a style that he sought to instil in his reform of the Vatican bureaucracy in Rome. Much deeper than a structural makeover and renewal of personnel—although it involved these too—it was a patient, radical reform of culture and of mindset.

In 2022, Francis approved a new [constitution](#) for the Vatican, a document that spelled out its culture, structure, and practices. “*Praedicate Evangelium*” (‘Preach the Gospel’) made clear that the power handed to the Church was given not to exact service, but to serve. It was published on the Feast of St Joseph, exactly nine years after the first Mass celebrated by the new Pope, in which he [spoke](#) of true power as that which protects both creation and creatures. This was the power that Francis wanted the Church to embrace: a gentle, holy power, one that cooperates with divine power, and therefore the real power in this world, which alone is capable of creating a new future.

You can see the fruits of his Rome reform not just in the decline of the administrative and financial scandals that were common under Benedict XVI, but in the delighted [surprise](#) of bishops who remember what it was like visiting the Vatican back then. Where once they were given marching orders or scolded by imperious curial officials, today they have a fraternal dialogue with the dicasteries. *Praedicate* says clearly that the Curia “does not place itself between the Pope and the bishops, but is at the full service

of both.” It is a [reform](#) of the very idea of power and authority: Vatican documents, vastly reduced in number, are these days the fruit of painstaking and lengthy consultations. Before Francis, anonymous denunciations and heresy trials were painfully common. But this new constitution seeks to ensure that theologians are no longer censored and ensure that Vatican officials look bishops in the eye, listen to them, and ask how they can help.

Though the Francis reform has been popular with bishops and cardinals, some have claimed that with regards to moral questions Francis placed too much stress on mercy, too much focus on individual circumstances, and in the process risked diluting the truth of the Church’s doctrine. Not only [African cardinals](#) were critical of a document in December 2023 put out by Francis’ close collaborator, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, declaring that, while the Church could not bless the relationships of same-sex couples, it was [fine](#) for those in them to be blessed, if they asked for it. As with *Amoris Laetitia*, which Fernández also helped author, [Fiducia Suplicans](#) upheld church doctrine on sexuality and marriage. But many bishops said the distinction was too subtle, too easily misinterpreted, too prone to be exploited by the liberal forces at the Church’s gates. It is a criticism that reflects the persistent fear of a law-and-order mindset that is seduced by the notion of imposing moral norms through the law, in alliances with national-populist movements, for example. The assumption is that the Church should not just witness to the truth of its beliefs, making a case for them, but seek political or power alliances to impose them. For instance, many U.S. bishops have often tried to do this by claiming that outlawing abortion was the “pre-eminent” issue for Catholics in elections. But Francis showed that this approach distorts the Gospel and reduces its ethical breadth—and it places more trust in the law and lawmakers, rather than in the power of grace.

Francis has helped to recover a longer tradition in the Church, well expressed by St Thomas Aquinas, that the law is necessary but not sufficient: and that in applying the law we need a Jesus-like attentiveness to individuals. In one of his great homilies in Colombia in 2017, Francis [described](#) how Jesus took his followers out to the lepers and the sinners and the paralytics, so that they would not rest in the security of precepts and prohibitions but would be forced to ask the uncomfortable question: “What

would God like us to do?” The genius of *Amoris* and *Fiducia* and Francis’ whole approach to moral and ethical questions was to make clear the real basis of the unity of a Church: it is not that all agree, or all are good; rather, that all of us are sinners, but all are capable of being transformed by God’s grace. Leave Church teaching, then, where it is; but do not use it to judge or despise others. Instead, make room for all in the Church and let each find her own way forward with the help of the battlefield-hospital team.

“Each person encounters God in his or her own way, within the Church, and the Church is mother and guide (for) each person along his or her own way,” Francis [told](#) journalists on the return flight from Portugal. He became the first Pope to receive a transsexual man in the Vatican, telling him he was a son of the Church loved by God, and he personally supported a group of trans women in a community outside Rome. Yet he has regularly [criticized](#) gender ideology as a threat to human dignity in its denial of sexual difference and the male-female polarity. Challenged about his response to the trans man, Diego Neria, Francis acknowledged the reality of gender dysphoria, and appeared to accept that therapy may be needed. “Hormonal imbalances create a lot of problems,” he said. “We have to take each case, and welcome him, walk with him, study him, discern and integrate him. That is what Jesus would do today.”

In his radical integration of the lens of mercy into the Church, Francis has made clear it is no longer enough to stay in the abstract, at the level of ideals and generalities. He asks us to discern realities, holding the wisdom and insights of the Church in fruitful tension with concrete individual stories and experiences; and in that tension to and open ourselves, prayerfully, to ask what God asks of us. For this we need a discerning heart, capable of seeing suffering and not flinching from it, able to not just lament and condemn but also to discern and reform. That was the extraordinary [message](#) he gave us in lockdown during the coronavirus pandemic, when from a dark, deserted St Peter’s Square he addressed a world in fear, assuring us that there God was with us, calling us not to be not just broken but broken open, and so changed. The temptation was always to recoil back into ourselves, to depend on our own resources, to try to cling to what we feared to lose rather than open ourselves to what God sought to give us.

After Covid, Francis invited the world's faithful to open themselves in this way, to ask how, now, the Church needs to change in order to undertake its mission. The three-year "[synod on synodality](#)" which concluded in October 2024, was arguably Francis' most significant reform. It was the largest global listening exercise ever undertaken, and through its many stages—local, national, continental and universal—produced a [blueprint](#) for a broad transformation of the culture of the Church. Synodality refers to the habit of gathering, listening, discerning and deciding, a way of operating that involves all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church. It takes for granted that all of the baptized—Pope, cardinals, bishops, clergy, religious, lay men and women—are equal in dignity and all called to take part in the life and mission of the Church. It holds that the Spirit has been poured out on us all, and by getting together to listen deeply to each other we discover what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Like all Francis' reforms, synodality involves rescuing a dimension of the Church that it has lost, and reinvigorating it for our time. It will be his greatest legacy: a school of conversion to "God's style" of relating, of serving, of developing the heart. Many of the cardinals who will elect Francis' successor have been involved in the synod process, and have seen the transformations. They have seen how, over the past 12 years, the Church has begun to relate to humanity in a whole new way—a way that looks much more like the Gospel. Whatever else they think the next Pope needs to do, they will believe that implementing synodality will be his key task—not just for a Church entering a new era, but to show an increasingly polarized and divided world that another way of relating to each other is possible.

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The Four Seasons Reveals a Side of Tina Fey That's Been Hiding in Plain Sight

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



Warm. Wistful. Tender. Empathetic. These are not words typically associated with [Tina Fey](#), whose humor has a reputation for being brutal. But they all apply to *The Four Seasons*, a new Netflix dramedy series co-created by and starring Fey that follows three apparently settled middle-aged couples through a year of upheaval. Absent are the absurd characters, rapid-fire jokes, and dryly pessimistic social commentary with which Fey [made her](#)

[name](#) on *Saturday Night Live*, and that have defined her career, from [Mean Girls](#) to [30 Rock](#). In their place is a moving depiction of marriage and friendship among Gen X empty nesters.

A partial explanation for the shift in tone is that *The Four Seasons* wasn't entirely conceived by Fey and her collaborators, Lang Fisher ([Never Have I Ever](#)) and Tracey Wigfield (*Great News*). It's based on writer-director-star [Alan Alda](#)'s 1981 film of the same name—an urbane box-office hit that has since been overshadowed by quintessentially '80s rom-coms like [When Harry Met Sally](#). As in Alda's version, the title refers to four seasonal group vacations (two half-hour episodes apiece in the series), each set to the appropriate Vivaldi concerto. Alongside a cast stacked with fellow A-listers [Steve Carell](#) and [Colman Domingo](#), Fey plays Kate, a responsible, high-strung pragmatist married to a passive, philosophical man, Jack (*SNL* alum [Will Forte](#)); Carol Burnett and Alda originated the roles.

Fey is well aware that this all represents a left turn for her. In a recent appearance on her old friend and [sometimes comedy partner](#) Amy Poehler's podcast, *Good Hang*, she described it as "a very, very gentle program" whose reception she's curious to observe. So compassionate is her approach, in fact, that it casts the nearly three decades' worth of work that preceded it in a new light. Beneath the veneer of misanthropy and the din of controversy her perspective has often incited lies a more generous sensibility that was always present but is only now coming to the fore.



“Authenticity is dangerous and expensive,” Fey counseled [Bowen Yang](#) in a 2024 interview for *Las Culturistas*, the podcast that the current *SNL* star co-hosts. Yang had gotten too famous, she said, to keep broadcasting blunt opinions on people with whom he might someday have to work. “Are you having a problem with [Saltburn](#)?” Fey asked. “Keep it to yourself. Because what are you going to do when [Emerald Fennell](#) calls you about her next project, where you play Carey Mulligan’s co-worker in the bridal section of Harrods and then Act 3 takes a sexually violent turn and you have to pretend to be surprised by that turn?”

Both the substance of Fey’s playful excoriation—that when you’re a celebrity, anything you say can be used against you—and the fact that it went viral are telling. For most of her career, and certainly since her portrayal of the harried, unglamorous sketch-show head writer Liz Lemon in *30 Rock* coincided with the rise of pop feminism in the late aughts, her every plot and utterance has been widely scrutinized. Tina Fey superfans may be legion, but she’s also absorbed more than her share of misogyny as well as criticism for her button-pushing approach to identity politics.

Plenty of the latter pushback has been not only justified, but necessary. Before the Black Lives Matter movement forced a [reckoning in Hollywood](#), Fey made the poor decision to show white performers in blackface on *30*

Rock. While the joke was always at the expense of an ignorant white character or a racist entertainment industry, context couldn't outweigh the images' hurtful impact. In 2020, she [apologized](#) and had those episodes pulled from streaming services.



Yet the hair-trigger sensitivities of audiences predisposed to judge Fey harshly have also fueled ridiculous backlashes. Following 2017's white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, the UVa alum caught flak for an [SNL](#) [“Weekend Update”](#) bit in which she jokingly urged viewers to drown their rage in cake instead of getting into fistfights with Nazis. No one watching in good faith could've mistaken her for excusing the marchers. (She even sneaked in unusually progressive opinions for broadcast TV: “It’s not our country. We stole it from the Native Americans. And when they have a peaceful protest, at [Standing Rock](#), we shoot at them with rubber bullets. But we let you chinless turds march through the streets with semiautomatic weapons.”) Nor was it hard to see she was playing an exaggeratedly naive version of herself. Still, she was self-critical enough to judge the segment as a failure. “If I had a time machine,” she said on [David Letterman](#)’s Netflix

show *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction*, “I would end the piece by saying... ‘Fight [the Nazis] in every way except the way that they want.’”

When Fey gets in trouble, whether for legitimate or specious reasons, it’s usually because her darkest humor is built atop a layer of cynicism about society—and Hollywood as a mirror of it—that isn’t always easy to unearth. Viewers got that her acclaimed *SNL* portrayal of an [airheaded Sarah Palin](#) reflected the then VP candidate’s pandering to a demographic that wanted women in politics to be “Caribou Barbie.” But they sometimes missed that the stars of *30 Rock*’s show-within-a-show, Jenna Maroney and Tracy Jordan, embody certain awful stereotypes about white women and Black men not because Fey was saying they truly represented those groups but because showbiz rewards performers who reflect audiences’ prejudices.

It’s not hard to imagine why—at this point in her prolific career, but also at this toxic moment for the cultural conversation—Fey might want a break from satire. (She has long been [rumored](#) to be a top candidate to run *SNL* should her mentor Lorne Michaels ever retire, but her disinclination to keep wrestling the zeitgeist makes it seem doubtful she’d want the job.) Indeed, she appears to be making an effort to avoid stress in her professional life. Her current comedy tour with Poehler reportedly finds the duo bantering in pajamas. She spoke on *Good Hang* about making time, after years of overwork, to “just be a person in this world and maybe, like, watch a program.” In the same episode, Fey explained her approach to making *The Four Seasons*. “I worked hard to build it to be a really healthy set and really, like, humane hours,” she said. “I was also extremely purposeful about bringing together people who I believed were good people who would not make any trouble for me.”



The disproportionate share of criticism Fey attracts is, in a way, a testament to how effectively she's caricatured herself over the years—as a schoolmarmish killjoy, a mousy prude, a blithely self-righteous white feminist—for an audience prone to conflating comedy with reality. She's copped to having been a “[caustic](#)” judge of her peers as a teen, but the characters she usually inhabits, onscreen and as a public persona, are, to borrow words Fey frequently uses herself, “[square](#)” and “[obedient](#).” A recent talking point has been her Enneagram personality test type: [the Achiever](#).

Fey's character in *The Four Seasons* is a more grounded, sympathetic version of this uptight woman. Kate can micromanage her friend group and her marriage, but when she errs toward officiousness, it's because that's her way of caring for people. “You've gotta always be the good guy,” she complains to Jack. “And that only leaves one other part.” The series is similarly generous with other characters. The revelation that Carell's Nick plans to leave his wife Anne (Kerri Kenney-Silver) after a gathering for their 25th anniversary drives the plot, throwing off both the other two couples and the overall group dynamic. But Nick comes off as less of a jerk than he is in

Alda's movie and more of a man struggling with his mortality. While Anne fades into the background of the film post-split, Fey goes to great, sometimes a bit clumsy lengths to honor the perspective of the jilted wife.



Where was she hiding this humanism, after years of depicting characters at their vain, stupid, oblivious worst? In plain sight, actually. There is no better indicator of a writer's worldview than how they end their stories. In that regard, Fey has always been sneakily optimistic. *Mean Girls* is often likened to the pitch-black high school satire *Heathers*, but *Heathers* concludes, after multiple murders, with its villain's suicide, while *Mean Girls* leaves us with a reformed queen bee and a utopian teenage social order. Whereas *Seinfeld*, another deadpan NBC sitcom about self-absorbed New Yorkers, notoriously condemned its characters to prison, *30 Rock* let Liz finally have it all: the career, the baby, the hot husband. Fey's next big project, the Netflix comedy [*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*](#), wrung humor out of an abused, traumatized kidnapping victim's adventures in a cruel city plagued by economic inequality. But—and here the clue is right there in the title—Kimmy's tenacity won out.

The Four Seasons is probably not destined to become a classic like *30 Rock* and *Mean Girls*; it offers neither the many madcap highs nor the occasional tone-deaf lows of Fey's best work. Still, it's a thoroughly enjoyable watch, one that reflects the wisdom and patience of age rather than the merciless genius of youth. Best of all, it reveals a hidden, humanizing dimension of the most fascinating character Tina Fey ever created: Tina Fey.

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Ex-FDA Official Is Worried About the FDA's New “Anti-Vaccine Tone”

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



Dr. Peter Marks is the kind of health official both Democrats and Republicans used to admire. He served in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for 13 years, most of them as director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research. There, Marks oversaw the critical process of reviewing and approving vaccines—like those against COVID-19—and biologic therapies, including gene- and cell-based treatments.

Marks earned trust and respect from academic and industry scientists as well for his emphasis on requesting the strongest evidence in evaluating new therapies, and for his willingness to support new technologies and approaches.

But he did not last long in the new Trump Administration. On March 28, Marks resigned after he says he was pressed by Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) officials to come in line with skepticism about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines or be fired. He says his team was also asked by HHS to turn over sensitive health information from the database the FDA maintains with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to track adverse reactions to vaccines. Concerned about how the data would be used, Marks refused and resigned. (HHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment for this story.)

Now, he is warning of a fundamental change at HHS and the FDA—one he believes is already proving to be very dangerous. “What I saw at the agency was an increasing anti-vaccine tone,” he told TIME On April 8. “I was hoping to work through it, but it was very clear to me that they just didn’t want to work through it.”

A clash about vaccines

Since Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a long-time vaccine skeptic, was appointed to head HHS, the agency has [removed pro-vaccination public service ads](#) made by the CDC, and it [missed a deadline](#) to decide whether or not to approve a COVID-19 vaccine from Novavax.

Marks, aware of Kennedy’s position on vaccines, began in November to draft a “package of things we could do to hopefully try to address some of

the issues” that anti-vaccine groups have. “I’ve been trying to reach out and say ‘I’m willing to meet you halfway,’” says Marks.

He came up with a four-point proposal on how the FDA could accomplish that. First, the agency would reassess how vaccines are labeled. “Vaccine labeling over the course of several decades has gotten very messy,” he says. “And the information for the patient is not as clear as it could be. That is a fact, and a legitimate criticism. We would look at ways to clean up labels and make them more transparent.”

The FDA would also hold listening meetings to hear from people about their concerns about the components that go into vaccines—such as thimerosal, which was removed from the MMR (measles) vaccine and other childhood vaccines in 2001 but is still used in some flu shots—along with vaccine safety and efficacy. The FDA already uses this practice while it reviews any major drug and vaccine, inviting the public to provide comments to its advisory committee of independent experts before the group votes on whether to approve a product.

Read More: [Food Safety Was Slipping in the U.S. Then Came Mass Layoffs](#)

Marks offered to have the FDA ask the National Academy of Medicine—a nonprofit, independent group that evaluates scientific questions to inform policy and improve the health of Americans—to study any of Kennedy’s concerns about vaccines, such as the role of adjuvants, which are ingredients to boost the body’s immune response.

And the FDA proposed revising the current system for reporting side effects or adverse events related to vaccines, so that the process of evaluating them and determining if they are reasonably linked to vaccines could become more transparent.

But Marks says he didn’t receive any response or feedback on these proposals before he left the organization. Dr. Marty Makary, nominated by President Trump, was sworn in as the new FDA director on the day Marks submitted his resignation and [signed off](#) on Marks’ departure shortly after taking office.

The measles fallout

The change in tone among the top U.S. health agencies has coincided with an ongoing measles outbreak, which has killed two children and caused [hundreds of infections](#). “I was so disturbed when I heard about the second measles death in a child that I used profanity with a reporter without realizing it,” Marks says. “Anyone who knows me would know that’s something I never do. I was so disturbed, and remain disturbed, because this is absolutely needless.”

As head of the FDA section that was responsible for reviewing data submitted by vaccine makers to approve their vaccines, Marks reiterates that the data supporting the safety and effectiveness of the measles vaccine is both clear and robust. “Measles vaccine is one of the safest, most effective vaccines we have,” he says. “Unlike other vaccines, which you might be able to argue about whether people should take them or not, the measles vaccine that has been given to children saves lives. It saves lives because one in 1,000 children who get measles die up front. Another one in 10,000 to 20,000 children die a few years later from persistent measles infection in the brain. So it saves lives. The measles vaccine is not associated with death, encephalitis, autism, or long-term adverse effects.”

Still, Kennedy has reportedly [appointed vaccine critic](#) David Geier, whose research on vaccines and autism has been discredited by judges and medical professionals alike, to study data on the safety of the MMR vaccine and a link to autism—despite the fact that scientists say any connection has been debunked for decades.

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