

21 Books to Read This Spring

Newsmagazine

02.26-03.05.2021

PLUS:
NIKKI HALEY
EYES A
2024 RUN

POWER

A record number of GOP women in Congress,
among the most conservative ever, are shaking up Washington

PLAYERS





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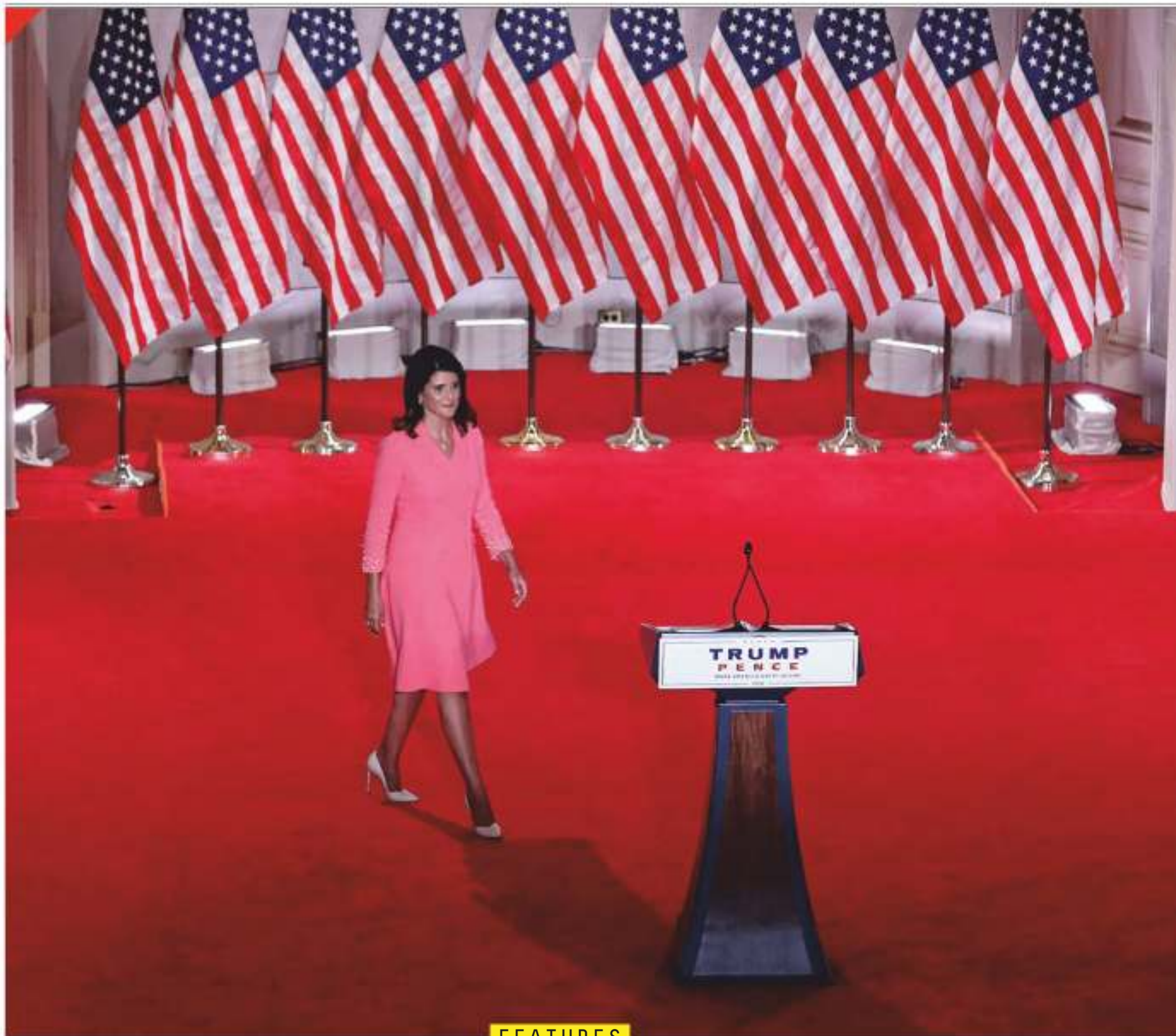
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FEATURES

THAT WAS THEN

Former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley (above, at the 2020 Republican National Convention), a possible contender for the GOP nomination in 2024, was once on the Trump team but has criticized him recently.

COVER CREDIT

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Ready to Rumble

A record number of GOP women are in Congress this year. They're more conservative than their predecessors and ready to push hard for what they believe in.

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The January 6 riot cleared the way for a politician offering Trumpism-without-Trump.

BY BILL POWELL

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PUBLISHED BY

Newsweek Magazine LLC

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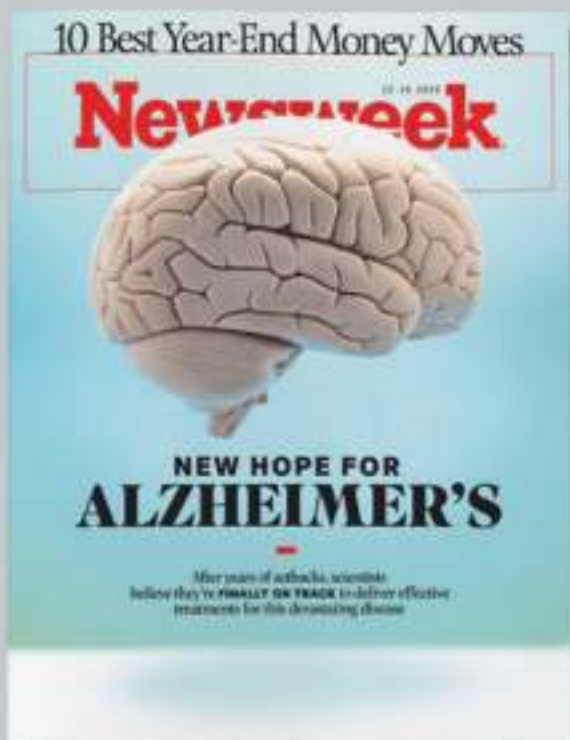
NEWSWEEK (ISSN0028-9604) is published weekly except one week in January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December due to combined issues. Newsweek is published by Newsweek Magazine LLC, 33 Whitehall St., 8th Floor, New York, NY 10004. Periodical postage is paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Newsweek, 33 Whitehall St., 8th Floor, New York, NY 10004. For Article Reprints, Permissions, Licensing, Back/Bulk Issues Newsweek.com/licensing Brian Kolb Newsweek@EnveritasGroup.com



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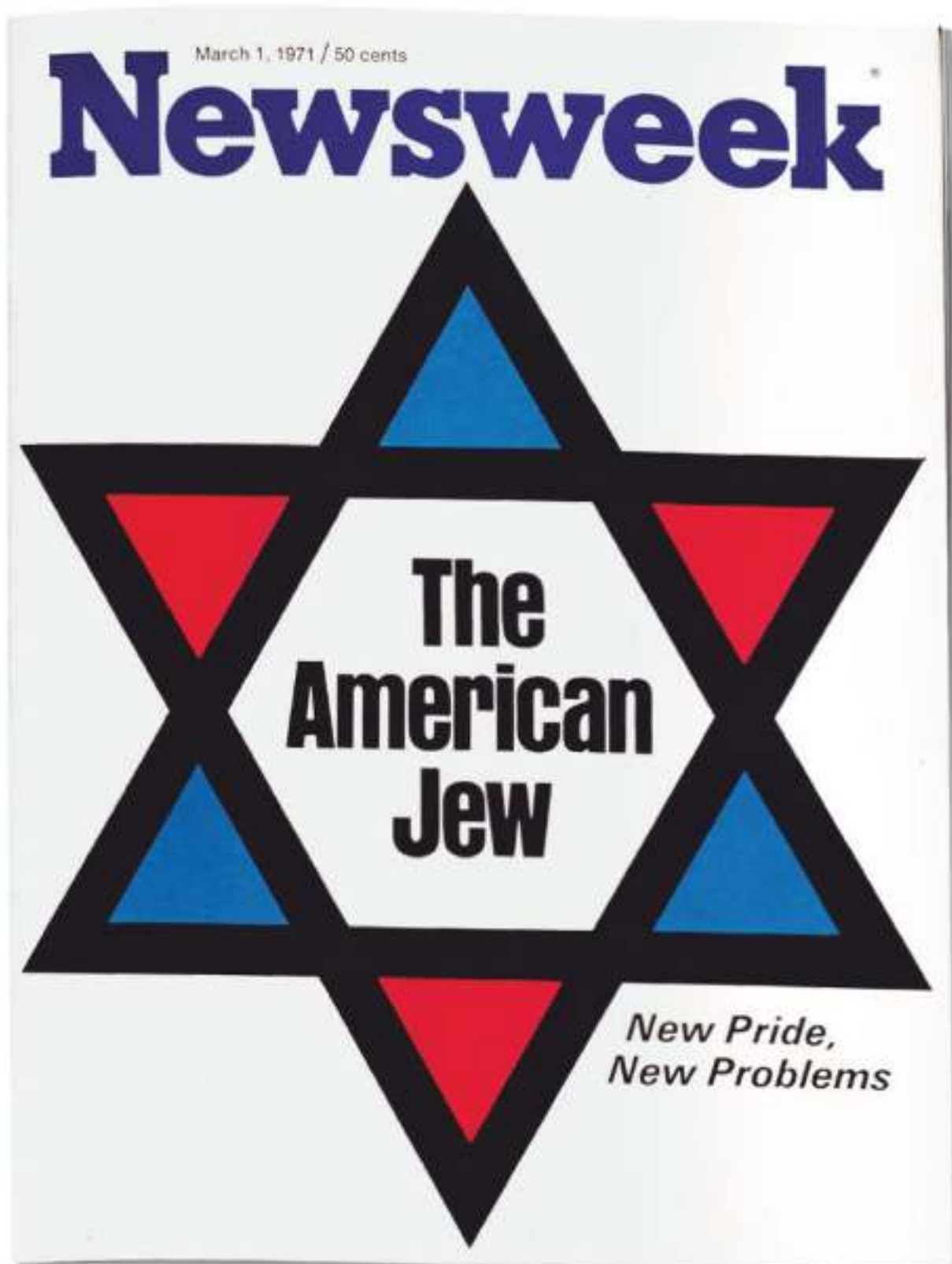
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The Archives

1971

Newsweek reported, “At a moment when they feel more cause for pride than ever before, American Jews find themselves in the midst of a new, troubling search for identity—as Americans and as Jews.” A *Newsweek* Gallup poll found that nearly half of the Jewish Americans surveyed supported diplomatic and military aid to Israel. Fast forward nearly 50 years: Gallup reported that 95 percent of U.S. Jews were sympathetic to Israel in 2019, but only 29 percent approved of President Donald Trump, despite his pro-Israel policies.



1981

“Before a joint session of Congress, Ronald Reagan laid out his blueprint for a second New Deal potentially as historic as the first,” according to *Newsweek*—a plan that included major tax cuts for business and individuals. In contrast, President Joe Biden plans to raise taxes on corporations, for a total hike of \$822 billion by 2024.



1998

Regarding rising tensions with Iraq over its weapons program, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said in *Newsweek*, “We want a peaceful solution, but it must be a principled one that gives...full and unfettered access” to investigate possible weapons of mass destruction. Later that year, the U.S. launched Operation Desert Fox, a four-day campaign against Iraq.

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BLAGOEVGRAD, BULGARIA

Prayer Celebration

Believers, on February 10, pray around a platform—covered with candles attached to jars of honey—during a ceremony marking the day of Saint Haralampi, Orthodox patron saint of beekeepers, at the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Eastern Bulgaria.

NIKOLAY DOYCHINOV

NIKOLAY DOYCHINOV/AFP/GETTY



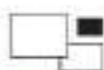


TAMPA, FLORIDA

Super Celebration

Mike Evans and Rob Gronkowski of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers ride in a boat with the Lombardi trophy during the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Super Bowl Victory Boat Parade on February 10. Tampa Bay defeated the Kansas City Chiefs 31 to 9 on February 7.

→ JULIO AGUILAR



NEW DELHI, INDIA

Price Protests

On February 9, police round up Indian Youth Congress workers during a protest against new agricultural laws, the rise of unemployment and increases in the prices of goods and services. Farmer organizations contend that new agricultural legislation passed in September shifts power to corporations from small growers.

→ PRAKASH SINGH



NAYPYITAW, MYANMAR

Uprising

A police vehicle fires water cannons in an attempt to disperse protesters during a demonstration against the military coup on February 8. U.S. President Joe Biden later announced sanctions against military leaders, including their business interests.

→ STR



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JULIO AGUILAR/GETTY; PRAKASH SINGH/AFP/GETTY; STR/AFP/GETTY

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POLITICS

The Exhausted Americans

A growing number of citizens are fed up and want an end to "toxic polarization," says crisis negotiator Peter Coleman. They may be sufficiently motivated to change the status quo.

 IF PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN WANTS TO HEAL THE divisions in U.S. politics, he needs to stop all this talk about "unity" and instead focus the attention of all Americans on a common foe: toxic polarization.

That's the advice the Biden administration has gotten from psychologist Peter Coleman. In a series of memos, Coleman, a mediator with experience in conflicts as far-flung as the Middle East, Haiti and Africa, has advised the new administration that the best way to repair and reverse the extremism in U.S. politics is to focus the attention of Americans on the virulence of their divisions and mobilize them to attack the problem.

Coleman has come to this conclusion after traveling the world consulting with peacemakers and policymakers and studying the societal conditions that often precede war, as well as those that often lead to peace. The current tensions in the U.S., Coleman argues, have their roots in the cultural and political shocks of the 1960s, which upset the existing order, and set the stage for a new era of political partisanship that began in the early 1980s and has been growing ever since.

Today, the nation is once again experiencing disruptive cultural and political shocks. "Our Capitol building

was overrun and five people were killed," Coleman says. "That is a historic event in America. The evidence suggests more is to come. Unless we do something to change course, extreme forces are going to make things worse."

Although the current state of affairs is dangerous, Coleman believes that the nation may be ripe for a new approach—86 percent of Americans are fed up with the "dysfunctional divisiveness" in our nation and are eager to overcome them, according to one poll. We may have reached a tipping point, he says. "Trump, COVID, racial injustice and storming the Capitol is a pretty powerful wake up call for America. I'm optimistic that enough people will say 'enough,' and that will start to move us in a different direction. But we have got to take advantage of this opportunity to do the work that's necessary to shepherd that process."

Although Washington can support this effort, ultimately it has to come from communities. Coleman, director of the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Columbia University and author of the forthcoming book *The Way Out, How to Overcome Toxic Polarization*, spoke with Newsweek about how the nation can heal.

BY

ADAM PIORE

Newsweek: What do you mean by “toxic polarization”?

Political polarization can be a healthy phenomenon and a necessary phenomenon, particularly in a two-party system like ours, because you need to have tension and different points of view that come together to move us forward. Toxic polarization is when you get into these almost psychotic camps that can't even imagine the other side's perspective. In the '50s and '60s, there was actually a call for more polarization in politics because we were sort of too homogenous, the parties overlapping so much. But then in the '70s, we started to see this movement away, with a big turning point coming in 1980s.

How do you measure it?

In Washington, you can ask, “Does Congress cross the aisle and support people on the other side, or do they just really sort of start to stonewall?” That's one measure that they've been able to track since 1869, and that shows a clear upward trajectory, beginning about 1980. There's also evidence about attitudes on the ground, about citizens and their take on the other side. Trump was not the cause, he was in some ways the effect. He certainly exacerbated it. He'll go away in some capacity, at least as President, but the underlying dynamics will remain.

What are those dynamics?

If you have a race-baiting president, that definitely triggers a lot of trauma and a sense of injustice. [Senator] Ben Sasse says we're in an epidemic of loneliness and disenfranchisement because we don't believe in the church and communities and our families are fractured, so we look for tribal belonging in our

political parties. It's a valid point. [The scholar] Jonathan Haidt [focuses on] differences in moral values—his research has found that liberals and conservatives differ on what they prioritize [conservatives favor loyalty and purity; liberals favor caring for communities and justice]. Others say the internet ecosystem and the “entertainmentization” of journalism and media have split us. We're addicted to the media, we're addicted to enmity.

They are all right. It's really how these things align and start to create dynamics that become very change-resistant. It's akin to a vicious cycle—a complicated set of problems that feed each other in unpredictable ways. Just bringing people together to talk can only have a limited impact because so many other elements are ripping us apart.

What lessons can we draw from other places that have experienced toxic polarization?

Scholars who have looked at 200 years of data—on how states interact, trade and [fight] wars [etc.]—find that something like 95 percent of the longer-term destructive relationships that states get into are preceded approximately 10 years by some

“Trump, COVID, racial injustice and storming the Capitol is a pretty powerful wake up call for America. I'm optimistic that enough people will say ‘enough,’ and that will start to move us in a different direction.”

major political or cultural shock that's dramatically destabilizing—an assassination attempt, or a coup attempt, or the end of the Cold War.

You've said that the current polarization in the U.S. started around 1980. What caused it?

In the late '60s and early '70s you had a lot of tumult in America—several political assassinations, a culture war, an anti-Vietnam movement. And about 10 years later we settled into these divisive patterns.

Somewhere between 75 percent and 90 percent of these long-term problems, when they end, when they deescalate, when they change—they've also followed some kind of major political shock. The combination of COVID-19 and Trump constitute a major political shock to our system. It's a political shock on steroids. Sometimes these things destabilize us enough that they provide fertile ground for really changing directions, and for bringing the country together. That doesn't mean it will happen, but it does mean the time may be right for something like that to happen.

When a complex system is highly destabilized, you see changes that lead to other changes that lead to other changes, and across some threshold you see a major change. That's what we've seen in political polarization in this country. Right now, we have a unique opportunity to affect real change because our government and our population has been increasingly moving towards war since the mid-1970s.

What can the Biden Administration do to bring us together?

Here's my frank assessment. I don't think a presidential administration is going to be able to manage this, because they're in the middle of the



MAD AS HELL
Although the current state of affairs is dangerous, the nation may be ripe for a new approach. Clockwise from top: A protest near the Reflecting Pool, Washington, D.C.; President Joe Biden; Peter Coleman.



conflict. They can certainly not exacerbate it and get out of the way. They can offer constructive solutions to real problems like COVID and joblessness and racial injustice that can start to reduce the resonance and grievances of many of the communities and take the heat out of a lot of the current tensions. But this really needs to be part of a social movement.

What kind of “constructive solutions” might Biden offer?

The principal thing I would recommend that Biden do is not talk about unity and healing yet. One of the

things we’ve learned from peacebuilding is you don’t go into a war zone and tell people to reconcile. Instead, you talk about toxic polarization as a pathology in our communities, our homes, and the impact it has on us personally, our children’s health and our community’s health.

The framing is critical. [The Biden administration] should say, ‘we need to address this pathology of toxic polarization like we’re going after COVID, because it’s a first order problem. If we can’t come together in our problem solving, we can’t tackle these other problems.’

Biden needs to genuinely listen to communities. But what it really is going to take is a social movement, and the infrastructure for that social movement is already there.

What do you mean by existing infrastructure?

At Columbia, we’ve been gathering the names of bridge-building organizations. In America, most are community-based. They’re not like the professional organizations that work overseas. They mostly spring out of community tensions, maybe a local issue that divided a community in a church or local government and then if they’re effective they last. There are thousands of those groups across the country. In addition, there are groups in journalism, and in politics, and in media, and elsewhere that are actively working to try to bridge divides. You have these instances of “positive deviance.” These are people effectively staying in communication and building bridges in places where most people can’t because we can’t stand each other or tolerate each other.

Gabriela Blum at Harvard studied Kashmir and the Israel-Palestine conflict and other long-term protracted conflict zones. She finds that groups and individuals are somehow effectively managing, even under the most difficult circumstances, to stay in communication with the other side and to build bridges. They’re sometimes surprising groups, like fishermen in Mozambique, who would fish and be able to go across enemy lines, because people needed their food. They were bringing nourishment to the combatants, but they were also a source of connection and information that helped people begin to understand each other. These are what I call the community immune systems.



SIMMER DOWN Constructive solutions could serve to ease current political tensions. Left: An argument at a pro-police demonstration in California in June.

Are there any examples of effective efforts of this sort in the United States?

In 1994, a man named John Salvi drove to Boston and opened fire on two women's health clinics and ended up killing three women and injuring many others. He was a pro-life zealot. This was a time in Boston when rhetoric and vitriol around abortion was at a fever pitch. Boston in particular has a long history of pro-life and pro-choice activism that dates back decades. Then this event happened where Salvi came in and shot these women. It was a destabilizing rupture. The mayor and the governor called for talks and the archdiocese called for de-escalation. But a group called The Public Conversations Project, which had worked in abortion, asked three pro-life and three pro-choice leaders in the community to come together for a short period of time in dialogue. They agreed to meet four times. It was difficult, but it was worthwhile. They extended it and ultimately engaged in secret dialogues for almost six years.

In 2001, these six women came out together and they co-authored an article in *The Boston Globe* called

Research on protracted conflict tells us that people need to be sufficiently miserable with the status quo.

— "Talking With the Enemy." They all agreed to basically drop the rhetoric and the vitriol and speak as honestly as possible about what these issues meant to them. Slowly over time, they developed such respect for one another that they really developed these close emotional bonds, but they also became more polarized on the issue. The more they spoke personally and honestly about what it meant to the other, and the more their relationships across the divide became important to them, the more difficult it was. But they learned to work together to avoid violence in the community. They learned to find common ground for young mothers and funding work for young mothers. The dynamic between them changed profoundly, even though their attitudes on the issue became more polarized.


And that's the key. These kinds of divisions don't have to be toxic. It's a profound metaphor about the power of these community-based structures. Bridge-building groups have networks within communities and the capacity to ultimately affect broader levels of change.

The Biden administration can help us—at the community level, at the state level and at the regional level—to understand where the resources are. I've been recommending a convening of groups to map the ecology in communities, in states and then in regions of the country, where we start to realize who's there.

Are Americans ready for this kind of change?

Research on ending protracted conflict tells us that people need to be sufficiently miserable with the status quo. The accumulation of emotional exhaustion that is everywhere, including my hometown of Dubuque, Iowa, [means that] people are ripe for something else. But they need to understand what that something else is. They have to have an alternative where they could save face and move forward.

A report by More in Common, an international group that studies polarization, has found that people are tired of the dysfunction. They see a growing middle majority of what we would call "exhausted Americans." In 2016, after Trump's victory, two-thirds of Americans were exhausted, fed up and wanted a way out. After the 2018 election that had grown to 86 percent.

A lot of people are miserable, and that's a good thing. They may be motivated to do something else. 

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OPINION

Building Back Better

Repairing the damage of the Trump years gives America a chance to redefine what being a citizen should mean

IN RESPONSE TO A GASH ON the body, white blood cells rush to the site of the wound. They work vigorously, the body's immune system alert to threat and activated to protect bodily systems from further harm.

So it was that in response to the Trump administration's authoritarian tendencies, made clear from the earliest days of his presidency, millions of Americans became members

of "the resistance."

People who were already involved in politics, as well as many who were not that particularly interested at any time before, became acutely aware that damage that could become irreparable was being done to our democracy. There was a vast realization—on the left and also on the right—that this

damage represented something much worse than the routine political corruption we'd all pretty much come to expect.

A civilization has an immune system just as the body does, and every citizen is an immune cell. Citizens rushed en masse to the wound that was represented by policies of the Trump administration. He got worse and worse at damaging our country; people got better and better at protecting it. In the end, the people of the United States kept a would-be dictator from mortally wounding our democracy.

And now what? What does citizenship mean now?

In keeping with President Joe Biden's exhortation that we should "build back better," millions are asking themselves what this new chapter in our history should mean for their own involvement in politics.

Do we just go back to our lives as we lived them before—barely casting a glance at what politicians are up to on any given day—or have we not learned that the political distractedness of far too many is part of what led to the problem to begin with?

Nothing will ever be the same, post-Trump. No one would have guessed our democracy was so vulnerable; no one would have guessed one man could do so much damage in such a short period of time; and no one would have guessed that so many of America's shadows would be up for review in such a concentrated way. Many of the things that the former president so grotesquely brought to the surface were dynamics that had been lurking for years. Trump did not just hurt us; he showed us to ourselves.

And now, an entirely new set of questions confronts us. How in fact

BY

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

[@marwilliamson](#)

do we build back better? What do we do to repair the damage that has been done, not just over the past four years, but some of it over the past 40, and some of it ever since our founding?

The country will never go back to what it used to be; millions are aware now of things that many of us were not as acutely aware of before. We're aware of the perils of denial regarding institutionalized forms of injustice; we're aware of the dangers of distraction as too many of our citizens farmed out the responsibilities of governance to a too often corrupted political class; and we're aware of the hypocrisy of our government in acting as though they're protectors of our common good, when as often as not they've been selling the collective good down the river for the past 40 years.

We've changed. We're different now, as individuals and as a country, and that is not entirely a bad thing. A year of COVID confinement, in addition to the last four years of Trump chaos, has affected us in ways that aren't quite obvious yet. But no person and no country can experience the compounded traumas of this past chapter of our history and come out on the other side of it the same people we were before.

That is why "build back better" must be more than a slogan; it must be an intention now built into the sinews of who we are.

A mature, rational, responsible person now wields the power of the presidency, and the value of that cannot be overstated. We will agree with him on some days and disagree on others, but every day we should give thanks for the fact that in America we are free to do that. A representative democracy is a constant conversation between our leaders

and we the people. We've upped the game radically on the kind of person we've chosen to be our leader. It's time to up our game as well on the kind of citizens we choose to be.

Citizenship should become an aspect of what all of us consider a meaningful and well-lived life. From attending city council meetings to reading our local newspapers, from becoming active in civic affairs to considering running for political office ourselves, nothing less than a new era of citizen involvement will be an adequate transformation of the resistance movement into its next best thing.

The passions that drove us to resist the authoritarianism of Donald Trump should not dissolve; they should be transmuted into that which is called for now. To each of us that will look different, but to all of us it will represent not only the active repair and rebuilding of our country but also some equally important changes inside ourselves.

I knew a couple whose house was destroyed by an earthquake many years ago, a devastating event that occurred fortunately while they were out of town. When I told my friend how sorry I was, she said that in the end it was a good thing, that in rebuilding the house they were making some changes they had always wanted to make but never

could. And this is similarly our chance, an opening that many of us have always wanted but could never make happen. A chance to do more than repudiate systems of injustice: A chance to design, articulate and bring about changes that will actually put America on a better path forward. From healthier food and agriculture, to a more humane policing and criminal justice system, to racial equity and amends, to a more enlightened educational system and care for America's children, to more conscious business and environmental protection, to just economics and proactively waging peace, we have the chance now to take advantage of this moment, to open a new window, to insist that the moral and aspirational needs of humanity take precedence over the outdated dictates of a soulless economics.

Many of us are exhausted by the Trump years, but this isn't a time to go back to sleep. The rest we seek will come not from sleeping but from waking. We need to be awake enough to integrate fully the lessons we've learned, as energized as we once were to ward off an enemy, to create something new and better for all the things that we have been through.

In the words of Jean Paul Sartre, "These are not beautiful times, but they are our times." These are our times now, and we still have the option to make them beautiful. ■

Many of us are exhausted by the Trump years, but this isn't a time to go back to sleep.

→ **Marianne Williamson** is a best-selling author, political activist and spiritual thought leader. She is founder of Project Angel Food and co-founder of the Peace Alliance. She is the author of 13 books, among them *Healing the Soul of America* and *A Politics of Love*. The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

MISINFORMATION MONITOR

Europe's Conspiracy Theory Echo Chamber

Several publishers and bloggers on the continent have repeated known falsehoods about both the election and the January 6 storming of the U.S. Capitol

FOLLOWING THE VIOLENT storming of the U.S. Capitol in January—two weeks before the inauguration of President Joe Biden—misinformation about what happened during the riots found a home overseas. Several European sites that had recently delved into promoting the U.S.-centric QAnon conspiracy theory and falsehoods about the 2020 U.S. election have now turned to the Capitol riots, claiming—as have right-wing commentators, misinformation publishers and some politicians in the U.S.—that it was actually the left who caused the violence. Many of those same sites continued to push falsehoods about the U.S. election until right before President Biden was sworn in or even during the inauguration.

Claims that antifa, a coalition of left-wing activists, was responsible for the Capitol riots have proven popular on European misinformation sites and social media accounts, despite the initial source for these claims later issuing a major correction to its story.

The German version of *The Epoch Times*, a right-wing pro-Trump newspaper, republished a *Washington Times* article claiming that a facial recognition firm, XRVision, detected antifa members at the Capitol.

XRVision, however, quickly said this was untrue, and the *Washington Times*'s story now features a prominent correction. The German *Epoch Times* also published the *Washington Times*'s correction and issued an apology. However, the site only issued the correction after its article had already reached close to 900,000 users on Facebook and Twitter, according to CrowdTangle data.

British conspiracy theorist David Icke—a former soccer player known for his claim that shape-shifting aliens control the world—also republished the *Washington Times* story yet has not issued a correction.

DataBaseItalia.it, an Italian site rated Red (or generally unreliable) by NewsGuard, regularly shares QAnon conspiracy theories and claimed that, “It was Antifa’s terrorists and not Trump’s supporters who rushed to the Capitol, broke in, and tried to incite a riot.” Another Red-rated site, MaurizioBlondet.it, posted videos of the riots, commenting: “Raid at the Capitol of Antifa wreckers who pretend to be ‘patriots.’ Not very convincing.”

The day after the Capitol riots, far-right French site RiposteLaique.com claimed that the demonstration was “good natured,” yet also that the



violence was committed by members of antifa posing as Trump supporters. “It was actually antifa militias that infiltrated the demonstration, and proof is starting to accumulate,” the site reported.

Also in France, some unreliable sites and commentators saw in these events the beginnings of a so-called “U.S. Spring”—like the Arab Spring—and warned that a violent popular revolution might also happen in Europe.

On January 7, Breizh-Info.com, a far-right site covering France’s Brittany region, wrote: “Are we moving



ANTIFA IN DISGUISE? European misinformation sites have trafficked in the untruth that the invasion of the Capitol was sparked by leftist provocateurs pretending to be Trump supporters.

misinformation about the election having been stolen from Donald Trump continued spreading in Europe.

On the day of the inauguration, the German *Epoch Times* published an article claiming that a “review of the elections [is] still far from complete” and that there had been “influence on the election from Italy.” Of course, the integrity of the U.S. election had already been affirmed by the governors and secretaries of state of all 50 U.S. states, as well as federal officials and the Electoral College. French QAnon website Qactus.fr wrote that the inauguration was just an “illusion,” continuing to assert that Trump would stay in power as the heroic figure at the heart of the QAnon conspiracy theory.

Real-life violence fed by online misinformation could well happen in Europe, too. Some well-known French misinformation websites are already warning about it. In Germany, observers of the Capitol riots were reminded of the events in Berlin in August 2020, when hundreds of people protesting the German government’s COVID-19 measures attempted to storm the Reichstag. (Police stopped them from entering.) Prior to the protest, right-wing activists had used messaging apps and social media to spread the falsehood that American and Russian soldiers were in Berlin to help overthrow the German government. During the protest, the claim emerged that even then-President Trump himself was in town. ■

→ **Virginia Padovese** is *NewsGuard* Managing Editor for Europe.

towards a US Spring?...Is it a fore-taste of what’s coming to Europe a few years from now?”

Three days later, the site Dreuz.info asked if the invasion of the Capitol could be the first act of a violent revolution in the making. “What happens when the democratic process does not work anymore?...The impossibility to express oneself through voting necessarily leads to civil war, and the Capital storming is the first act.”

In the days and hours leading up to Joe Biden’s inauguration, and even right after he was sworn in,

In the days and hours leading up to Joe Biden’s inauguration, and even right after he was sworn in, misinformation about the election having been stolen from Donald Trump continued spreading in Europe.

NEWSMAKERS

Talking Points

The Washington Post

"He's decompressing. He's enjoying some of the time he hasn't had in the past. And he's thinking about impeachment."

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM ON FORMER PRESIDENT TRUMP

FOX

"I THINK THAT CANCEL CULTURE, A LOT OF THAT IS JUST A FABRICATION. IT'S NOT REALLY REAL."

—DON CHEADLE



Don Cheadle

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

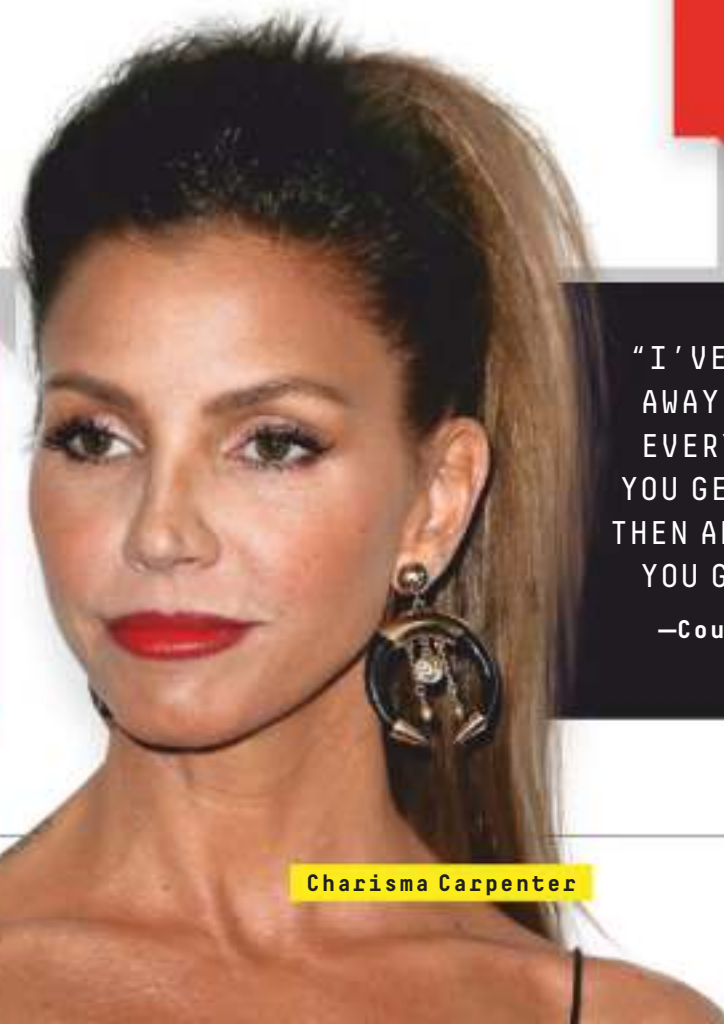
"Going through the five phases of grief, we need to come to the acceptance phase that our lives are not going to be the same. I don't think the world has really absorbed the fact that these are long-term changes."

—THOMAS FRIEDEN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



"It troubles and saddens me that in 2021 professionals STILL have to choose between whistleblowing in the workplace and job security."

—ACTRESS CHARISMA CARPENTER ALLEGING MISTREATMENT BY DIRECTOR JOSS WHEDON



Charisma Carpenter



"I'M HERE LIVE. I'M NOT A CAT."

—Lawyer Rod Ponton who was accidentally using a cat filter on a Zoom hearing



Hollywood

"She was a trailblazer, a diva and will be deeply missed."

—MOTOWN FOUNDER BERRY GORDY ON THE DEATH OF MARY WILSON OF THE SUPREMES

DAILY BEAST

"I'VE MADE IT A POINT TO STAY AWAY FROM POLITICS, BECAUSE EVERY FOUR YEARS IT CHANGES. YOU GET USED TO HATING ONE GUY, THEN ANOTHER ONE COMES IN, THEN YOU GET USED TO HATIN' HIM."

—Country singer Willie Nelson

FROM LEFT: CARA ROBBINS/CONTOUR/GETTY; DAVID LIVINGSTON/GETTY; FOTO JAGODKA/GETTY

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READY TO

A record number of **REPUBLICAN WOMEN** are in Congress this year. They're more cons

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SHANA NOVAK



GETTY

D RUMBLE

ervative as a group than in the past and **READY TO PUSH** hard for what they believe in



by
STEVE FRIESS



In early February, just one day after the House banished Georgia Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene from congressional committees for incendiary behavior and two days after GOP lawmakers decided by secret ballot to allow Wyoming Representative Liz Cheney to retain her leadership position despite her vote to impeach Donald Trump, a third drama involving Republican women was unfolding in upstate New York. In a case over disputed ballots in the state's 22nd congressional district, a judge ruled in favor of Republican Claudia Tenney, handing her victory over Democrat Anthony Brandisi by a mere 109 votes—thereby settling the last undecided race of the 2020 election. That decision makes Tenney the 38th Republican woman to serve in Congress this year, smashing the previous record of 30 set in 2006 and more than doubling the number of female GOP representatives in 2018.

The rise of Republican women has been the one bright spot in the 2020 election for an otherwise

battered GOP, which lost not just the presidency but also effective control of the Senate with the surprising win of two Democratic first-timers in Georgia's runoff races in January. But anyone expecting these female lawmakers to act as a tempering force within the party—Republican women as a group historically have been more moderate than their male counterparts and more open to negotiating with colleagues across the aisle—is likely in for a big surprise. This class of GOP congresswomen looks to be the most conservative in history, with a larger-than-usual number whose views are sharply to the right and who are apparently in no mood for bipartisanship.

"This cycle, we've elected some Republican women who are quite strident in their positions—more strident than we've ever seen before," says former New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican and former Cabinet official in the George W. Bush administration. "They didn't come to Washington to compromise."

CLASS OF 2020

First-time GOP House members (above, posing on the Capitol steps) include the the largest number of women ever. A month into her tenure, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia (near right) was removed from her committee assignments for incendiary behavior. Wyoming's Liz Cheney (far left) faced backlash from lawmakers and Trump supporters for voting to impeach former president Donald Trump.

FROM LEFT: TASOS KATOPODIS/GETTY; SAUL LOEB/AFP/GETTY; MICHAEL CIAGLO/GETTY

To be sure, not every newly-elected Republican woman is a violence-espousing conspiracy theorist like Greene, whose antics have included heckling a Parkland school shooting survivor and seeming to endorse the execution of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. Nor are they a Glock-toting gun-rights activist like Colorado Representative Lauren Boebert or an outspoken firebrand like Illinois Representative Mary Miller, who took flack for saying at the pro-Trump rally before the Capitol riot, “Hitler was right about one thing.” A few of the new GOP congresswomen have even expressed willingness to work with Democrats, especially representatives like Tenney who narrowly flipped seats from blue to red. For them, seeking common ground is political common sense.

Still, most of the record 19 first-term GOP women in the House won big, often by selling themselves as unbending, Trump-style conservatives heading to

Washington to mix it up. And early signs suggest it’s not just the hard-liners among them who will toe the party line. Only one of the 19 newbies, Representative Young Kim of California, has joined the Problem Solvers Caucus, a group of 54 Republicans and Democrats focused on writing and supporting bipartisan legislation. (Three first-term Republican men are members.) By contrast, 11 voted against certifying President Joe Biden’s Electoral College victory, all of them voted against a second impeachment of former President Donald Trump and just three voted to strip Greene of her committee assignments.

What’s more, only seven of the new women signed on to an Inauguration Day letter from 17 freshmen Republicans to Biden calling for a fresh start. All seven signatories won their elections by fewer than five percentage points; Representative Mariannette Miller-Meeks of Iowa won by a scant six votes. “After

“We’ve elected some **REPUBLICAN WOMEN** who are more strident than we’ve ever seen before. They didn’t come to Washington to **COMPROMISE**.”



two impeachments, lengthy inter-branch investigations, and, most recently, the horrific attack on our nation's capital, it is clear that the partisan divide between Democrats and Republicans does not serve a single American," the letter said. "We firmly believe that what unites us as Americans is far greater than anything that may ever divide us."

It's too soon to draw conclusions, particularly given what a tumultuous first month the congressional newcomers have faced, says former Ambassador to Austria Swanee Hunt, founder of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "There could hardly be a worse time to forge cohesion, but the new women in Congress are talking among themselves, and that's where it all starts," says Hunt. "There will be dramatic twists and bumps in the road. But as bad as this moment is, with more GOP women in Congress I do think we'll see more women bonding across the aisle."

An early test of the potential for compromise is coming soon as Biden's \$1.9 trillion COVID relief package begins to wend its way through Congress. Initial signs are that the GOP women won't break the party mold: As of mid-February, no Republican woman in Congress had indicated support. Given that everyone seems to agree, at least in theory, that more needs to be done to stabilize the pandemic-battered economy, this does not bode well for other areas of policy and hopes of a new bipartisanship.

From the Ashes of Defeat

THE SEEDS OF THE 2020 SURGE IN GOP WOMEN IN Congress were planted in the weeks after the 2018 mid-term election, which saw Democratic women balloon their numbers in the House from 62 to a record 89. At the same time, the ranks of Republican women shriveled from 23 to 13. Democrats took back control of the House on the strength of an especially motivated crop of female candidates offended by the first two years of the Trump White House and shocked that Hillary Clinton had failed in 2016 to become the first woman elected president. Well-funded and well-organized Democratic women booted Republicans out of seats in such unlikely places as South Carolina and Oklahoma as well as in more conservative corners of California, New Mexico and New York.

The showing by GOP women was deeply disappointing, says Julie Conway, executive director of

the Value in Electing Women Political Action Committee, or VIEW PAC, formed in 1997 to help elect Republican women to Congress. There was also a tinge of admiration for how outside Democratic groups had zeroed in on rising female politicians with prior office-holding experience and nurtured them with early money that helped establish them as contenders. VIEW PAC subsequently forked out \$640,000 to female Republican candidates in 2020 and raised another \$1.2 million for their campaigns.

Representative Elise Stefanik of New York, who in the 2018 cycle headed up candidate recruitment for the National Republican Congressional Committee, was particularly frustrated that just one of more than 100 female candidates she persuaded to run in 2018 won. Her solution—that NRCC needed to support more women in their primaries—was met with resistance from male Republican leaders who dismissed it as a form of "identity politics." After a public spat with then-NRCC Chair Tom Emmer, Stefanik vacated her NRCC post to relaunch her Elevate PAC with a narrowed focus of financially supporting and personally mentoring female candidates at the earliest stages of their races. E-PAC doled out \$415,000 to 2020 Congressional campaigns, up



WOMEN IN THE HOUSE

The first-timers: Lisa McClain of Michigan (top) sank \$1 million into her campaign to help win her House seat; Colorado gun activist Lauren Boebert (middle) vowed to bring her Glock to work. New York's Elise Stefanik (below) was key in recruiting more GOP women to run in 2020.



FROM TOP: TOM WILLIAMS/CQ-ROLL CALL/GETTY (2); BILL CLARK/CQ-ROLL CALL/GETTY



“There could hardly be a **WORSE TIME** to forge cohesion, but the new women in Congress are talking **AMONG THEMSELVES**, and that’s where it all starts.”



from \$118,000 in 2018.

The parallel efforts by E-PAC and VIEW PAC bore impressive fruit last November. Eleven of the 14 Republicans who won back seats that had flipped to Democrats two years earlier were women, and a record seven women won GOP primaries in open seats in heavily Republican districts. That “just never happens,” Conway says, because usually there’s a long line of male politicians who have impatiently waited for an incumbent to retire. Two of those winners, Representatives Diane Harshbarger of Tennessee and Lisa McClain of Michigan, each plunged more than \$1 million of their own money into their campaigns in order to best a crowded field of men; Conway says candidates spending big out of their own pockets for House races was historically largely the province of men.

Conway worried during the campaign about some of the more extreme candidates; neither she

nor Stefanik’s PAC supported the QAnon-promoting Greene, who triumphed anyway as the lone woman in a crowded primary field to replace retiring Representative Tom Graves in a ruby-red northern Georgia district. “We supported and worked with every single one of the Republican women who won with the exception of Marjorie Taylor Greene and Lauren Boebert,” Conway says.

In the case of Greene, Conway adds, “not only did we not endorse her, I actively worked against her. It was the first time I’d worked against Republican women because I knew what’s happening now was going to happen. The Democrats were going to make them our AOCs,” referring to Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the outspoken New York progressive.

Driving in the Right Lane

GREENE AND BOEBERT ARE OUTLIERS IN THEIR stridency and tendency toward harsh rhetoric as well as in some of their more far-right views. But overall, the slate of new Republican women in the House is a mostly conservative bloc that appears, thus far, to be in near lockstep with male leaders who push adherence to the party line and, for that matter, with most of the GOP women already in Congress. Only two Republican women in the House supported the second Trump impeachment: Wyoming’s Liz Cheney, the No. 3-ranked Republican House leader and the highest-ranking GOP woman in Congress, who offered a withering condemnation of the ex-president’s culpability in inciting the Capitol riot, and Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler of Washington. Among the first-timers, only Young Kim, and Representatives Maria Salazar of Florida and Nicole Malliotakis of New York voted to remove Greene from committees.

“This [behavior] should not be tolerated by either

party,” says Kim, explaining her vote. “Representative Greene’s comments and actions, from spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to questioning 9/11 and school shootings, are wrong in any context. I cannot in good conscience support this rhetoric.”

Comparing the 30 GOP women now in the House to the 25 Republican women serving in the 109th Congress of 2005-07, the previous record, shows how much more conservative the group has become. Most of the GOP female representatives of the 109th were, predictably, anti-abortion, opposed to LGBTQ rights and affirmative action and took little interest in protecting the environment. But about half of them received praise from the Federation for American Immigration Reform for votes opposing restrictions on immigration and most voted at least some of the time in ways that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People approved of. Six of them supported some forms of abortion rights and gun control, for which they received grades lower than an “A” from the National Rifle Association. One, then-Representative Nancy Johnson of Connecticut, received a 100 percent rating from the pro-choice advocacy group NARAL, a 53 percent rating from the pro-LGBTQ Human Rights Campaign and a 70 percent rating from the League of Conservation Voters. (Johnson’s fate was a harbinger of what moderate GOP women would face; she lost her seat to a Democrat in 2006.)

By contrast, not one of the Republican women currently serving in the House supports abortion rights and every one of them boasts an “A” rating from the NRA. On immigration, 25 of them supported the hard-line anti-immigration policies of the Trump administration, including reductions on asylum and the building of a border wall. (Three of the women from the 109th Congress are still in the House, and two of them—Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia—are now senators.)

The more conservative bent of many of the Republican newcomers partly reflects Stefanik’s political sensibilities, given her hands-on efforts in recruiting them. The New Yorker provided a template for gaining traction and attention. She was elected in 2014 at 30 as the youngest-ever Republican woman; she had a moderate reputation, espousing a desire to work in a bipartisan fashion and opposing Trump on his coziness with Russia, his border wall efforts

and the ban on travel from several Muslim-majority nations. Then, in 2019, her national profile soared as one of the most vocal defenders of Trump as the House moved to impeach him for his efforts to strong arm Ukraine’s president into digging up dirt on the family of Joe Biden, his likely opponent in the 2020 election. The president rewarded Stefanik for her advocacy by hopping on Fox News to lavish praise: “This young woman from upstate New York, she has become a star.”

All of this was instructive to ambitious 2020 candidates, says Liz Mair, a longtime Republican strategist who worked with Stefanik on Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty’s short-lived bid for the 2012 GOP presidential nomination. “She really, really, really, really wants to be Speaker, and the reality of the Republican Party now is you’ve got her and Liz Cheney playing two very different hands. Cheney clearly takes a view that you don’t get to be speaker unless you do a good job and stick to your principles and don’t waver and are consistent and tough. Stefanik has decided she can’t be speaker without being super Trumpy so she’s just going to be super Trumpy.”

Yet Cheney too, despite her impeachment vote, is more typically a rock-ribbed, lock-step conservative. She has voted with House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy 92 percent of the time—and, in fact, in agreement with Trump’s positions about 93 percent of the time, according to a FiveThirtyEight tracker. (Stefanik, according to this measure, voted in accordance with Trump’s position about 78 percent of the time. Yet she has the ex-president’s favor for her willingness to support his baseless election fraud claims and champion him personally.) Cheney, daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, is so

“One of the things women
bring to Congress is that we
are **PROBLEM SOLVERS**.
It’s, ‘let’s figure out how
to make **THINGS WORK**.’”





conservative that she continues to oppose legalized same-sex marriage a good six years after the U.S. Supreme Court settled the matter and nearly a decade after her own sister married her wife. It is solely that she accepted the presidential election results and blamed Trump for inciting the January 6 riots that turned her, temporarily, into the conservative respected by Democrats.

"I think it's notable that someone like Liz Cheney is becoming the voice of reason," says political scientist Melissa Deckman, an expert in gender and politics and author of *Tea Party Women: Mamma Grizzlies, Grassroots Leaders and the Changing Face of the American Right*. "That doesn't bode well for compromise on policy."

Also discouraging for potential cross-aisle bipartisanship: In recent weeks, the state GOPs in Arizona,

Wyoming, Nebraska and Illinois have censured prominent Republicans, male and female alike, who voted for the second impeachment or publicly refuted Trump's election-fraud claims. That telegraphs a clear message to the new GOP women in Congress that it behooves them not to cross party lines—or Trump, even out of office. Says Deckman, "All of these women, regardless of their personal views, recognize how much hold Trump still has on the party."

Whitman, who voted for Democrats over Trump in both 2016 and 2020, but remains a registered Republican "for now," agrees: "There's no longer a cohesive Republican Party. To say 'Republican,' you're talking about Trump. It's my way or the highway. That's the message that's been given to so many."

Conway, the VIEW PAC executive director, dismisses such claims, insisting several of the newly

LEANING RIGHT

Pro-life activists, here demonstrating in front of the Supreme Court last year, were pleased with the choice of judge Amy Coney Barrett, a conservative and devout Catholic, to replace the late Ruth Bader Ginsberg on the high court. Coney Barrett once wrote in a law school article that abortion is "always immoral."

elected women—she pointed to Kim, Malliotakis, Salazar, Tenney and Representative Ashley Hinson of Iowa, among others—promised on the campaign trail they’d be bipartisan and independent. The vote to retain Cheney in a House leadership post was 145-61, an overwhelming statement in support of a woman who had gone head-to-head with Trump, she notes. “Had she lost, I probably would’ve packed it in because that would mean that there are more lunatic congressmen than not and to stand up for what you believe in will you get punished,” Conway says. “That’s not what happened, though.”

Yet that vote did have one important distinction: It was taken by secret ballot. It’s unclear how the new members voted—or if that vote might have been different in a public tally. But none disagreed when, the day after she lost her committee assignments, Greene declared defiantly about Trump: “The party is his. It doesn’t belong to anybody else.”

How the Right Was Won

ONE REASON CONWAY REMAINS CAUTIOUSLY optimistic that the expanded ranks of Republican women in Congress will be a force for compromise and cross-party collaboration, even with their more conservative leanings, is because, until the past decade, that was generally true. “When we were up to 25 Republican women in the House [in 2006], they met regularly with the Democratic women to see what they could work on together,” Conway recalls. “Women work better with women.”

A flood of studies back the notion that women lead more collaboratively and less confrontationally than men. Women in Congress sponsor and co-sponsor more bills than men, according to a study in the *American Journal of Political Science*.

They also co-sponsor more bills with members of the opposite party as well as with members of their own gender, according to an analysis by Quorum.us, a public affairs analysis firm. They take more bipartisan fact-finding trips than men, attend hearings more frequently and, according to one 2011 analysis by researchers at Stanford and the University of Chicago, they bring an average of \$49 million more back to their districts than men.

Yet past performance does not predict future results, and the 30 GOP women in the House bear little resemblance in ideology or public demeanor to the prior cohorts. Nor, for that matter, do most of the eight Republican women in the Senate (Maine’s Susan Collins and Alaska’s Lisa Murkowski are notable exceptions). Even Justice Amy Coney Barrett, now the sole female Supreme Court appointee by a GOP president, was selected, in part, for her unwavering arch-conservative take on Constitutional law—a far



“All of these women, regardless of their **PERSONAL VIEWS**, recognize how much hold Trump still has **ON THE PARTY**.”



FROM TOP: MARIO TAMA/GETTY; CHRISTOPHER GOODNEY/BLOOMBERG/GETTY; NICHOLAS KAMM/AFP/GETTY



PAST AND PRESENT
 Senator John McCain surprised observers by picking Sarah Palin (above) as his running mate in 2008. Former New Jersey Governor Christie Whitman (left) did not vote for Trump in 2016 or 2020. Below: Coney Barrett is sworn in.



cry from the first woman appointed by a Republican president, Sandra Day O'Connor, who became the epitome of centrism in rulings regarding abortion, affirmative action and LGBTQ rights.

The shift, scholars say, is the logical result of an evolution in women's roles in the GOP that began with John McCain's surprise pick of then-Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his vice presidential running mate in 2008. "It's fair to say she disrupted expectations of what it meant to be a Republican woman running for office," says Kelly Dittmar, director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. "She was interestingly trying to balance her femininity and feminine expectations—'I'm a mother, I'm feminine in how I portray myself'—while, at the same time saying, 'I'm tough as nails, I'm a pit bull with lipstick, I'm a hockey mom. I'm strong, don't mess with me.'"

Palin gained additional fame and influence as the anti-Obama Tea Party movement took off in 2010, an intra-party insurgency that saw conservatives mount primary challenges against and otherwise impede advancement of GOP elected officials seen as too bipartisan. The result was that, in order to succeed in Republican politics, especially at the

federal level, a candidate had to be an unwavering conservative with little tolerance for compromise. By 2018, with the ascension of Trump, a mass exodus of white college-educated women from the GOP further reduced the variety of opinion within the party.

Barbara Bollier, a lifelong Republican elected to the Kansas Legislature four times, switched parties in 2018 and ran unsuccessfully as the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate in 2020. Part of a wave of GOP women leaders who switched sides in Kansas in recent years that also included the now-Democratic Governor Laura Kelly, Bollier says they saw the right-wing orthodoxy tighten its grip on the party and isolate women who didn't toe the anti-abortion line.

"The entire time I ran as a Republican, the Republican Party did not support me," she says. "My run for U.S. Senate as a Democrat was my first experience having a party stand behind me even though I had been a Republican my whole life. I thought it was best to try to change things from within, so I worked to do that and failed. At some point, you have to recognize when what you're doing isn't working."

Whitman agrees: "Why would you be a woman in the Republican Party if you were a moderate given the way we've been behaving as far as women's rights and the way we treat women and the way we support a president who's clearly a misogynist? We've been losing those centrist women because the party hasn't shown overall that it's very interested in them."

By 2020, then, the women who could be successful in GOP primaries, particularly in red districts, were likely to be conservative Trump acolytes, Deckman says. "The idea that electing more women means more compromise, more civility, more attempts to reach across the aisle is rooted in the 1990s," the political scientist says. "You had a lot more moderate Republican women reaching across the aisle, including a lot of women who were pro-choice. That clearly is not the case for Republican women now by and large in Congress."

Deckman adds, "Like everything else, Republican women who run for office, like Republican men, are more polarized. One impact of the Tea Party and then Trump has been to make the party more centered toward the right. You end up with more conservative women coming to Congress."

Or, as Susan Estrich, who in 1988 became the first woman to run a major-party presidential campaign for Democratic nominee Michael Dukakis, puts it:

“You can’t win a Republican primary if you are a moderate—except maybe in Massachusetts.”

Glimmers of Kumbaya

IN EARLY FEBRUARY, THE DISPUTE OVER GREENE’S committee assignments unleashed a marathon of recriminatory floor speeches complete with threats of future partisan retribution. By the time the House voted to strip Greene of her committee assignments on a near-party line vote, it was hard to imagine how a group of adults so bitterly angry with one another could ever find common ground.

Yet at the same time as that spectacle played out in their midst, Beutler, a Republican from rural southwestern Washington who was elected on the Tea Party wave in 2010, and Representative Pramila Jayapal, a Democrat from Seattle who co-chairs the Congressional Progressive Caucus, were texting each other. Both worried that the current system requiring sign-ups for COVID-19 vaccinations via the Internet was leaving out Beutler’s older constituents and Jayapal’s poor and racially diverse electorate, so they were teaming up—even as their parties were tearing each other apart—to get a telephone hotline set up in their state.

“One of the things women bring here to Congress is that we are problem solvers,” Beutler says. “It’s, ‘let’s figure out how to make things work.’ I don’t know if it comes from being a mom and you just gotta get it done regardless of how you feel or that you wish circumstances were different.”

It’s examples like that that encourage Kim, the first-term member from California who joined the Problem Solvers Caucus and voted against Greene. Despite their challenging first month of the 117th Congress, she says, the new members have nonetheless tried to connect. “It’s a very close, tight-knit freshman class,” Kim says. “We regularly talk to each other, have our own conversations in our own private chat rooms—individually or as a group. We make an effort to get to know one another. And I personally try to reach across the aisle and get to know my Democratic colleagues too. It’s very important to me because I came here to get things done in a bipartisan way.” Kim says she’s working with fellow California Representative Katie Porter, a Democrat, on a bill to provide money for mental health services for youth impacted by the COVID-19 lockdowns and has had good introductory conversations with Virginia Representative

Abigail Spanberger, also a Democrat, about working together on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Yet Kim may be an exception owing to the fact that she won her seat over incumbent Representative Gil Cisneros by about 4,100 votes in one of the year’s closest House races. And Conway admits that for many of the new House members, compromising with Democrats may carry risks for 2022.

“The No. 1 target for the Democrats are going to be our 11 Republican women who just flipped seats because the best time to get that seat back is the first time they’re running for re-election,” Conway says. “All of these women are conservative, but they’re not as conservative as some people who are going to be running against them in primaries. When a right-winger runs against one of these women and they get a lot of Trump money behind them, not only do they beat the woman, they lose the seat.”


What’s more, for every Young Kim wanting to keep her head down and get to know her cross-aisle colleagues, there’s a representative like Republican Nancy Mace of South Carolina realizing the power of confrontation. Mace ignited a feud with Ocasio-Cortez of New York when she accused AOC of embellishing the danger she faced during




MIXED VIEWS

Jamie Herrera Beutler (above) was one of two GOP women to vote to impeach Trump. Nancy Mace (right) is feuding with Democrat AOC on Twitter. Young Kim (below) is the lone GOP female newbie in the House to join the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.





“One thing **I LIKE** about working with some of these women is that in general, they don’t lead with their egos. They’re **WORKHORSES**.”



the Capitol riot for political gain. Mace discussed the incident several times on Fox News and sent out fund-raising emails to capitalize on the drama. Ocasio-Cortez replied that such an effort shows Mace “is cut from the same Trump cloth of dishonesty and opportunism. Sad to see a colleague intentionally hurt other women and survivors to make a buck.” Uncowed, Mace mocked the Democrat on Fox News the next day, saying that she’d been “living rent-free I guess in her Twitter account all weekend.”

Such moments bode poorly for collaboration, but they don’t necessarily reflect what’s going on behind the scenes, says Patricia Russo, executive director of The Campaign School at Yale University, a non-partisan training program for female candidates. Folks like Mace “are being very forthright in their opinions and they’re getting covered disproportionately to many other women who are quietly

doing their work and are effective in a different way. It’s the personalities of these women.”

Deckman also doubts that an era of comity is in the offing: “I’m not expecting this big influx of GOP women in Congress to really change much. If anything, members of the minority party often feel they have to stick together to have any leverage, so there’s even less incentive especially on the House side for people to want to work together.”

Still, Beutler believes that as the drama of the riots and impeachment give way to a more normal legislative year, opportunities abound for the new women to find common ground. She views herself as a template—ProPublica shows she voted with Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi a surprising 46 percent of the time during the last Congress and still won re-election by a landslide—and points to topics like COVID-19 relief, sexual assault in the military and parental leave as areas ripe for compromise.

“One thing I like about working with some of these women is that in general, they don’t lead with their egos,” she says. “They’re workhorses. When you’re well-prepared and you’re not shooting from the hip and you tend to have a little bit more of a circumspect approach, I love that.”

Dittmar agrees that it’s too soon to know whether the uptick of GOP women will alter the tempo and temperature of the House. It depends, she says, on “whether some of the women who were elected in swing districts try to appeal to the ideological center or will they feel like doubling down on the base because they’re electorally at risk if they don’t. If so, you’re going to see less willingness to work across party lines. We don’t have the answer to that yet.”

→ **Steve Friess** is a NEWSWEEK contributor based in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,
providing you various content:
brand new books, trending movies,
fresh magazines, hot games,
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



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by
BILL POWELL

NIKKI

HALEY'S

OPEN

FIELD

The Capitol riots cleared the way for
a 2024 run by a daughter of immigrants who offers
Trumpism-without-Trump

Photo-illustration by
GLUEKIT



POLITICS

of South Carolina, Haley had won the support of women and college-educated voters in two statewide elections. Left unsaid—it didn't need to be said—was that she didn't think Trump could win those voters back, and that she could. It also went without saying that as an Indian-American woman, she would be perfect casting to run against Vice President Kamala Harris.

Haley's comments made clear how profoundly the Capitol debacle has altered the party landscape. With his Republican-record 74 million votes in 2020 and his close defeat (which his base didn't accept, in any case), Donald Trump was the overwhelming GOP frontrunner for 2024. If the former president himself didn't run, the leading spot would surely go to a Trump-anointed surrogate like Don Jr. or Cruz. But the violence in D.C. shriveled the Trumpists' political power, and even an acquittal in the Senate impeachment trial won't restore their hold.

Many analysts had already speculated about Don Jr.'s prospects. During the 2016 campaign and ever since, Trump's eldest son had taken a high profile political role in speeches, TV appearances and on social media, defending his father and eviscerating his critics. He was good on the stump, energized crowds and seemed to relish political combat. He had no political experience—he still works as an executive vice president of his father's company—but as his father's 2016 win made clear, that can be a plus.

In the weeks since the 6th, Trump and his supporters comforted themselves with polls that showed the former president retained significant support among GOP voters. An NBC survey taken in late January showed 87 per cent approved of Trump's performance as president—just two points lower than his approval rating among Republicans just before the election.

But Junior's political ambitions fell along with the Capitol barricades. He had been a warm-up speaker at the "Stop the Steal" rally that turned deadly. Since then he has been on social media, defending the rally and bashing Democratic critics—almost as if nothing important had happened. Most political analysts and even some Trump loyalists can't believe he actually thinks that. "If any of [the Trumps] are thinking about a political future, then rehabilitating the 'brand's' post-January 6 image has to be a 24/7 operation," says the former campaign adviser.

Haley to the Rescue?

FOR THOSE REPUBLICANS WHO BELIEVE THE PARTY SHOULD SIMPLY move on from the Trumps—just as it did from the Bushes after George W.'s disastrous eight years in the White House—there stands Nikki Haley. She's an obvious choice for a party that needs to expand beyond non-college-educated white men. She's an Indian-American woman, the daughter of immigrant parents, and has a record as a capable, two-term governor. As U.N. ambassador she worked quietly and, to hear several of her fellow ambassadors tell it, effectively in pushing Trump's foreign

NIKKI HALEY WAS A DONALD TRUMP loyalist, one of the rare high-profile cabinet members to leave the White House on good terms. Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner even told *Newsweek* last summer that she'd be welcome to return, anytime she chose. But there she was on the Laura Ingraham show on Fox News in late January, offering a distinctly non-Trumpian view of the 2020 election.

"We lost a lot of women and a lot of college-educated. We want to bring them back in and expand the tent," she said. "January 6 was a tough day, and the actions of the president since Election Day were not his finest, and [that] troubles me greatly because I'm really proud of the successes of the Trump administration, whether it was foreign policy or domestic policy. [But] the actions of the president, post election day, were not great."

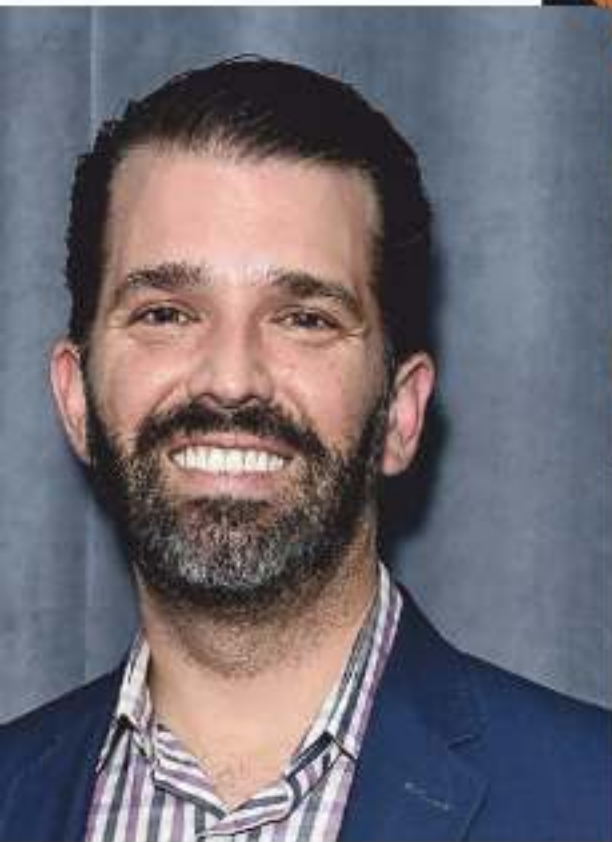
Haley's statement rocked the GOP and, not coincidentally, articulated a rationale for her own 2024 run, assuming she wants one. She was careful to praise Trump's achievements, but she unmistakably distanced herself from her former boss in a way that other potential 2024 candidates—Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul—have not. In Trump-world in Mar-a-Lago, says a former senior campaign adviser who was granted anonymity in order to speak candidly, "heads were exploding."

As a pro-business, fairly conventional Republican governor

FROM LEFT: OLIVIER DOULIER/AF/GETTY; STEVEN FERDMAN/GETTY; GERRY MELENDEZ/THE STATE/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE/GETTY

COOLER

Nikki Haley (right, after being elected to a second term as South Carolina governor in 2014) may appeal to moderate Republican voters who are turned off by Trump's flamethrower rhetorical style and that of his son and possible political heir, Donald Jr.



After Haley's comments on the Capitol riot, “heads were exploding” at Mar-a-Lago.

policy. She has none of Trump's sharp edges, but would bring, political allies believe, similar policies to the White House.

The idea of “Trump-ism without Trump” has serious appeal for many Republicans who believe Haley is positioned to be the bridge between “Trump-ism” and more conventional conservatism. For a long time after his shock victory in 2016, most establishment Republicans believed Trumpism was like a hurricane blowing through town: an isolated event that causes damage but won't be repeated anytime soon. The narrow 2020 loss—and the 74 million votes Trump received, more than any previous Republican candidate—put the lie to that idea.

Haley, her friends say, long ago came to the conclusion that the establishment view of Trump and what he stood for was wrong. She understood that the key policy tenets of Trumpism that differ markedly from what used to be GOP catechism are here to stay: skepticism of free trade; deep reluctance to deploy U.S. troops in protracted ground wars; a demand that allies pay

more for their own defense; opposition to illegal immigration; and most important, a willingness to defend all of the above unapologetically. Many of these were fringe positions pre-Trump; they are now the new GOP catechism.

Haley is “a principled neo-Trumpian,” says Cliff May, founder and president of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank. In the eyes of her advocates, she would sand down the rougher stylistic edges of Trump-ism—the constant tweeting, the rhetorical combativeness that exhausted so many Republicans over the last four years—while adhering to most of Trump's policies.

The one issue on which she differs markedly from Trump is race. Her friends cite what was arguably the signature moment of her two terms as governor in South Carolina: the 2015 killing of nine African-Americans at Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a Black congregation outside Charleston, by a white supremacist.

The murders devastated Haley and convinced her that the time had come to remove the Confederate flag, which still flew above the state house in Columbia. The battle flag had long been a political flash point in South Carolina and throughout much of the South. She knew she would need widespread support, including from some politicians who in the past had rejected any efforts to remove the flag. In the wake of the Mother Emanuel murders, South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, whom Haley appointed to his Senate seat in 2012, told *Newsweek* that the only way to pull together that coalition was to lead “from a place of tenderness, of brokenness, of vulnerability, and that’s exactly what she did. It was very impressive.”

She drew predictable support from prominent Democrats such as African-American Congressman James Clyburn. But she also managed to persuade Paul Thurmond, a state senator and the son of segregationist Senator Strom Thurmond, to back the flag’s removal.

Haley understood, as she put it, that some South Carolinians looked upon the flag “with reverence.” But she made clear that it was also a symbol of the ugliest chapter in American history. The day the flag was taken down, Haley said, “was a great day for the state of South Carolina.”

By 2024, her allies hope the type of political judgment she demonstrated could be exactly what Republicans will be seeking. “You’d get a lot of the Trump policies, but none of the mess that comes with it,” a senator friendly with Haley told *Newsweek* before the election, granted anonymity in order to speak frankly. “You’d get someone who demonstrated calm, pragmatic competence as a successful two-term governor, plus the foreign policy experience at the U.N., plus the immigrant story, all presented in a very elegant package. Do you honestly think Don Jr., or anyone else for that matter, is likely to beat that? I don’t.”

That argument, to Haley’s supporters, became even more compelling after January 6—and is no doubt part of the reason Haley was willing to criticize Trump just weeks after the riot.

Eyes on the Prize

FEW IN HALEY’S ORBIT DOUBT THAT HER EYES ARE ON THE PRIZE. At a conservative political convention during Christmas 2019 in Palm Beach, a number of Republican luminaries, Fox News personalities, GOP donors and current and former Trump advisers gathered for cocktails one evening. The off-the-record conversation got around to what the post-Trump GOP would look like. Haley’s name quickly came up. “Well, she’s sure got the fire in

CAROLINA COLORS

Top to bottom: Pro-Confederate battle flag protestors at the state capitol, June 2015; praying outside the church where nine Black people were killed in July 2015; Haley signing a bill the same month to remove the battle flag from the state house. Opposite: Vice President Kamala Harris is sworn in.





FROM BOTTOM LEFT: JOHN MOORE/GETTY; JOHN MOORE/GETTY; WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY; ANDREW HARNIK/AFP/GETTY

As an Indian-American woman, Haley could be a **fearsome challenger** to Kamala Harris


the belly,” said a GOP senator who may be mulling a run for the White House. “Hell, she’s got a furnace in that damned thing.”

This reporter reminded the group that in her memoir, Haley said she doesn’t consider herself ambitious: she calls it “the A word.” (“I’ve never thought of myself as ambitious,” she writes, “at least not in the calculating way people use this word to describe women.”)

A prominent conservative pundit looked at the senator, who looked at a big Trump financial backer, who looked at one of the

Trump aides. And then, more or less simultaneously, they all laughed out loud.

However former Governor-and-Ambassador Haley wants to characterize her own ambition, it’s pretty clear it extends to residing at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Having formed an advocacy group in 2019—Stand For America—to give her a voice in policy

debates, Haley, like the rest of the GOP, waits to see what Trump will do about 2024. If he stands down, Haley will be among the GOP front runners. And even if he doesn’t, she may, friends say, go for it anyway—and run against her former boss. “I’m not saying she’s 100 percent all-in at this point,” says a longtime South Carolina political ally, speaking off the record in order to be candid. “But January 6 shook her, and disgusted her. She’s gonna look around pretty soon and ask, ‘can I clean up this mess?’ And her answer’s gonna be yes.” 

BOOKS

21 Books to Read in Spring 2021



QVASIMODO/GETTY; TOP RIGHT: RICH FURY/GETTY



➔ THE END OF WINTER AND THE BEGINNING OF SPRING is a fickle time, weather-wise. You might see snow, rain or sun on any given day. But whether you’re curling up in front of a cozy fire or catching some rare rays of sunshine on a park bench, you can depend on good books to keep you company. Looking for a small-town feel-good love story, a hair-raising thriller about the subject of a true-crime podcast, inside looks at two famous first ladies, the history of how a famous publishing house got started in the shadow of the Nazis—or more? *Newsweek* has chosen some of the best new fiction and nonfiction available this spring for your reading pleasure. —Juliana Pignataro



Good Company
By Cynthia D'Aprix
Sweeney | April

27.99 | ECCO

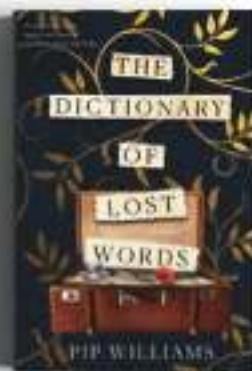
Sweeney's highly anticipated, poignant second novel introduces us to Flora and Julian Mancini, a married couple whose 20-year relationship is called into question when Flora stumbles upon an envelope containing her husband's wedding ring, one he said he lost years before.

FICTION



The Sweet Taste of Muscadines
By Pamela Terry | March
\$27 | BALLANTINE BOOKS

Lila Bruce Breedlover returns to her small hometown in Georgia, a place she left in a hurry after high school, following her mother's sudden death in the grape arbor behind their home. Lila and her two siblings begin to uncover the truths of their family's history in this gracefully plotted, sweet Southern story.



The Dictionary of Lost Words
By Pip Williams | April
\$28 | BALLANTINE BOOKS

What if the women involved in the making of the Oxford English Dictionary got the credit they deserve? Williams turns history as we know it on its head in this delightful debut, spotlighting those women and their contributions, using the awe-inspiring power of words themselves to illuminate them.



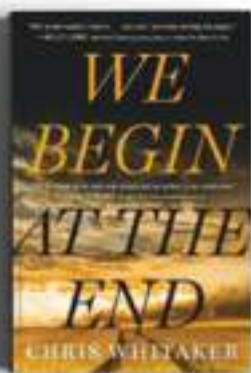
Early Morning Riser
By Katherine Heiny | April
\$26.95 | KNOPF

Jane arrives in Boyne City, Michigan, population 3,000, and quickly falls in love with a local woodworker. Only it turns out that dating Duncan means getting involved with more than a few exes, neighbors and townspeople. Heiny's novel is the perfect pick-me-up, filled to the brim with lovable eccentrics and delightful oddballs, all of who seem to be moonlighting as something else.



Project Hail Mary
By Andy Weir | May
\$28.99 | BALLANTINE BOOKS

From the author of *The Martian* and *Artemis* comes another interstellar story, in which the sole survivor of a mission has the weight of the world on his shoulders. Weir spins a space yarn in a way only he can. Fans of his earlier works won't be disappointed.



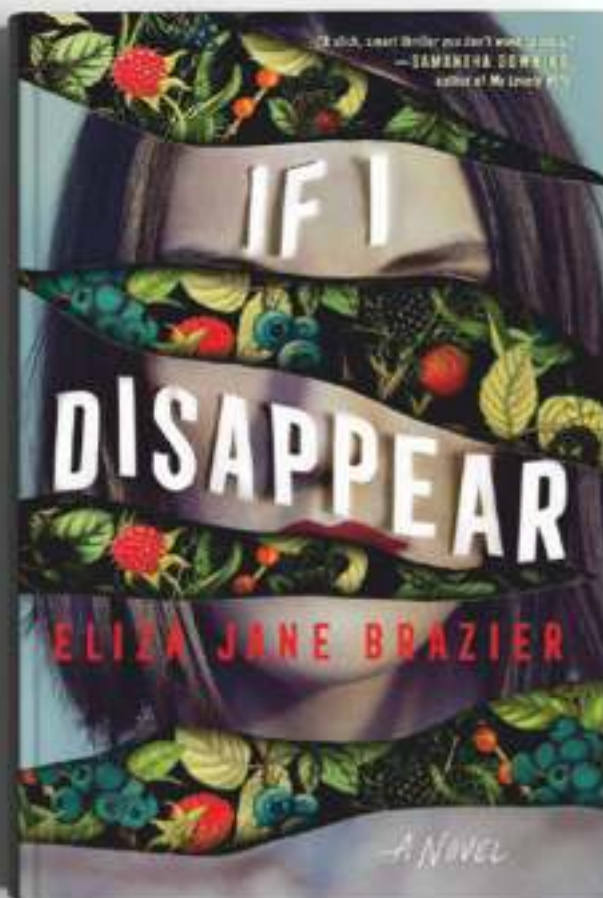
We Begin at the End
By Chris Whitaker
| March
\$27.99 | HENRY
HOLT AND CO.

Duchess Day Radley is an outlaw. At 13, she's hardened against the world, having seen more of its jagged edges than a child should. Trying to survive and raise her younger brother, Duchess' life is again knocked off course by an earth-shattering tragedy. With prose as eerily beautiful as its settings, you'll be left thinking about this novel long after the final page.



Folklor
By Angela Mi Young Hur
| April
\$26.95 | EREWON

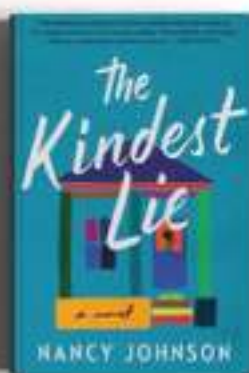
Elsa Park, a physicist working in Antarctica, must contend with the unknown after the world she's tried to outrun plants itself directly in front of her. This soulful saga is replete with evocative settings and masterfully crafted lives.



If I Disappear

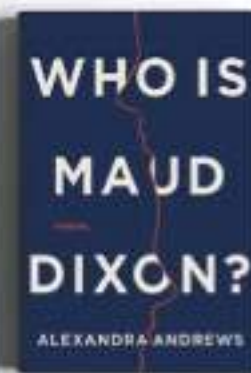
By Eliza Jane Brazier | January | \$26 | BERKLEY

Sera Fleece, alone and adrift, is spurred to action when her favorite podcast host, Rachel, goes missing. But when she arrives at the isolated ranch of Rachel's parents, things get stranger and stranger. Sinister characters and inexplicable occurrences punctuate the dreamlike trance and surreal landscapes in this debut novel, where everything might just be exactly as it seems.



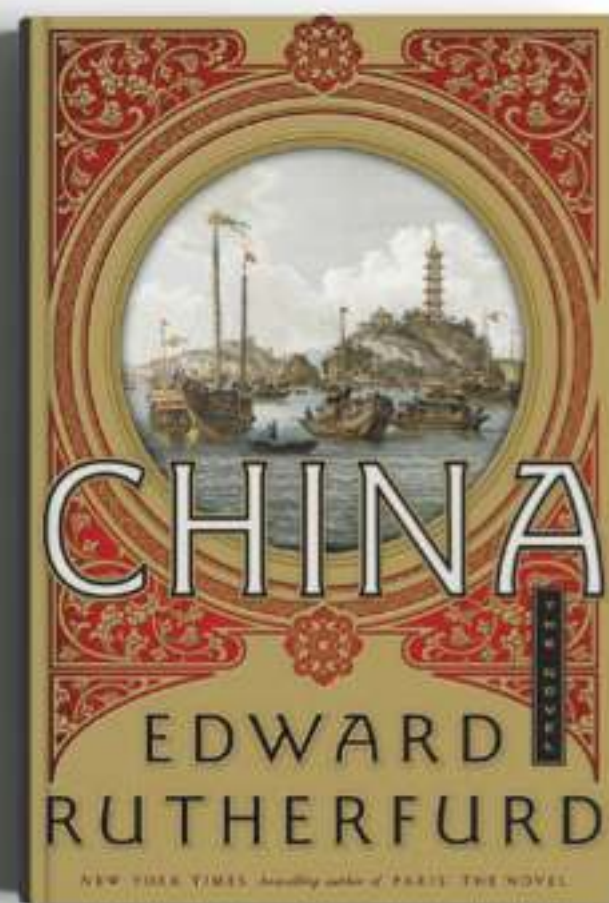
The Kindest Lie
By Nancy Johnson
| February
\$27.99 | WILLIAM MORROW
Ruth Tuttle, a Black

Ivy League educated engineer, returns to her Indiana hometown in 2008 to find it beset by despair, as lost jobs and racial tensions crack its foundation. It's there, however, that she finds a connection to Midnight, a young white boy looking for meaning. This profound and beautiful debut is a sharp exploration of racial divides and community in America.



Who is Maud Dixon?
By Alexandra Andrews
| March
\$28 | LITTLE, BROWN
AND COMPANY
Florence Darrow, let go from her junior publish-

ing job, suddenly finds herself the assistant to a world famous but elusive writer, nom de plume Maud Dixon. Dixon's writing takes them on a trip to Morocco, where Florence wakes up in a hospital with no memory and Dixon nowhere to be found. This propulsive tale keeps ratcheting up the suspense until you're flying blind through hairpin turns at light speed. Just who is Maud Dixon? And who is Florence Darrow?



China

By Edward Rutherfurd | May | \$35 | DOUBLEDAY

The unparalleled master of the historical saga returns, this time, with an eye on China. Beginning with the First Opium War in 1839 and continuing through the present day, Rutherfurd tells a sweeping tale that brings to life a nation's history, traditions and the people who lived through it as if by magic.



Every Last Fear
By Alex Finlay | March
\$26.99 | MINOTAUR
BOOKS

The already-shattered Pine family, the subject of a hit true crime podcast,

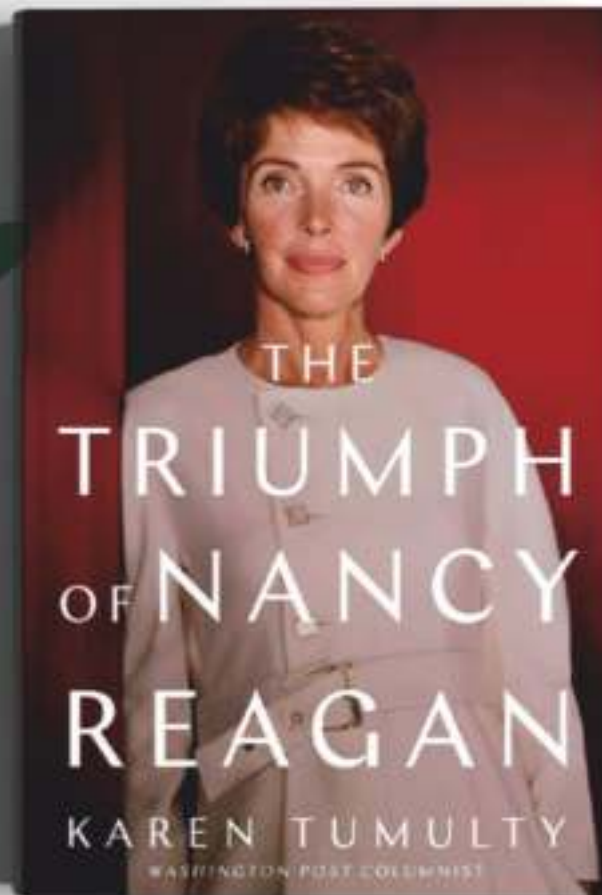
is further destroyed when the rest of the family, except their college-aged son Danny and his older imprisoned brother Matt, are found dead on a vacation in Mexico. While Danny serves a life sentence for the murder of his high school girlfriend, young Matt must attempt to piece together what happened to his family, and how it might be linked to his brother's fate. This debut is gripping from the first bone-chilling line until the final page.

Good Neighbors

By Sarah Langan | February | \$27 | ATRIA BOOKS
A false narrative reaches a fever pitch in this unsettling story set in the quasi-dystopian future of a Long Island suburb. The Wilde family, freshly arrived from Brooklyn, don't quite fit in on idyllic Maple Street. Neighborhood queen Rhea Schroeder casts them out once and for all at the same time as a sinkhole opens inside a nearby park and Rhea's daughter falls inside.



NONFICTION



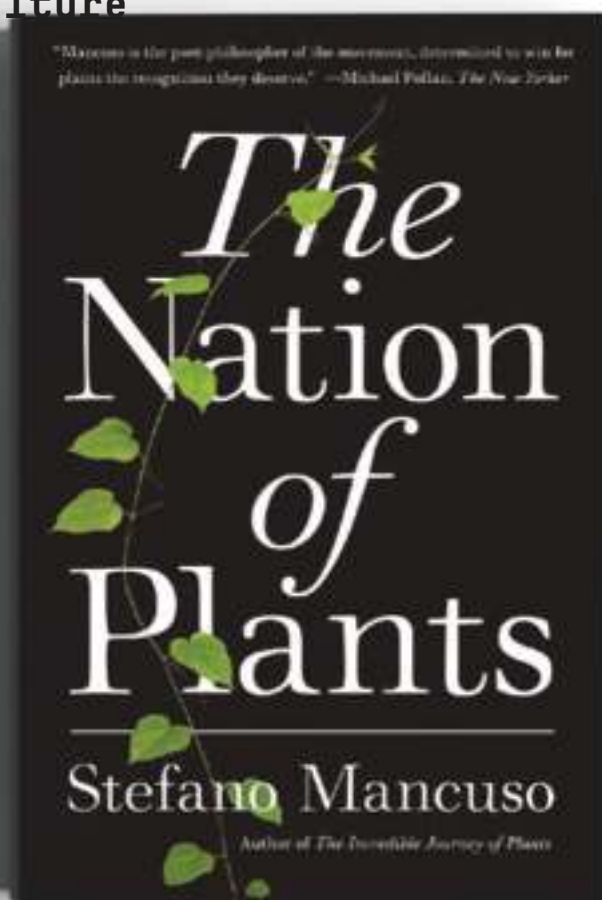
The Triumph of Nancy Reagan

By Karen Tumulty | April | \$32.50 | SIMON & SCHUSTER
Washington Post columnist Karen Tumulty examines the impact First Lady Nancy Reagan had on her husband's presidency, starting with a look at her childhood to her time in the White House. Tumulty does a remarkable job presenting a complete picture of a renowned first lady, and bringing novel material to the subject.



**Lady Bird Johnson:
Hiding in Plain Sight**
By Julia Sweig | March
\$32 | RANDOM HOUSE

Sweig deftly pulls back the curtain on the life and achievements of First Lady Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson, inviting us to explore the lesser known aspects of a woman who helped shape her husband's presidency. Armed with thorough research and a keen eye, Sweig gives Johnson the credit she so richly deserves, all the while entertaining us in the process.



The Nation of Plants

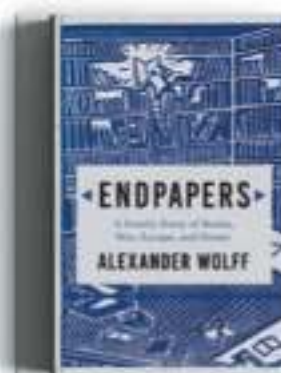
By Stefano Mancuso | March | \$21.99 | OTHER PRESS

Originally published in Italian and written by a top plant neurobiologist, this artfully crafted exposition delightfully delves into the lives of plants by presenting the eight pillars on which those lives are built.



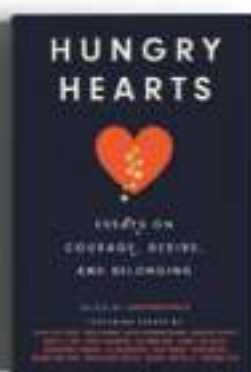
Under a White Sky: The Nature of the Future
By Elizabeth Kolbert | February
\$28 | CROWN

The authoritative mind behind the groundbreaking *Sixth Extinction* follows with a stark look at the world humans have created, focusing on those whose lives are dedicated to solving the challenges we've wrought in the natural world. With her signature sharp eye and deep understanding, Kolbert brings us with her as she travels to the farthest reaches of the globe.



Endpapers: A Family Story of Books, War, Escape and Home
By Alexander Wolff | March
\$28 | ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS
Wolff explores the lives

and history of his father and great-grandfather, the distinguished founder of Pantheon Books. As books were being burned and banned by the Nazis, Kurt Wolff escaped from Germany and ended up in New York, by way of France, where he began the still-flourishing publishing house. Drawing upon extensive family documents, *Endpapers* is as riveting as the fiction the Wolffs themselves have published, and deeply affecting. **N**



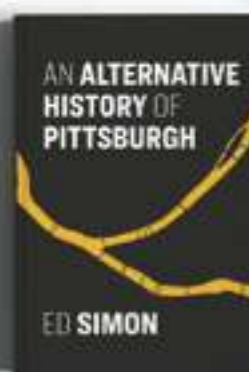
Hungry Hearts: Essays on Courage, Desire, and Belonging
Edited By Jennifer Rudolph Walsh | February
\$26 | THE DIAL PRESS

Sixteen influential thinkers from a range of fields, including Ashley C. Ford, Sue Monk Kidd and Bozoma Saint John, share personal and vulnerable stories of love, loss and finding oneself in a world of uncertainty.



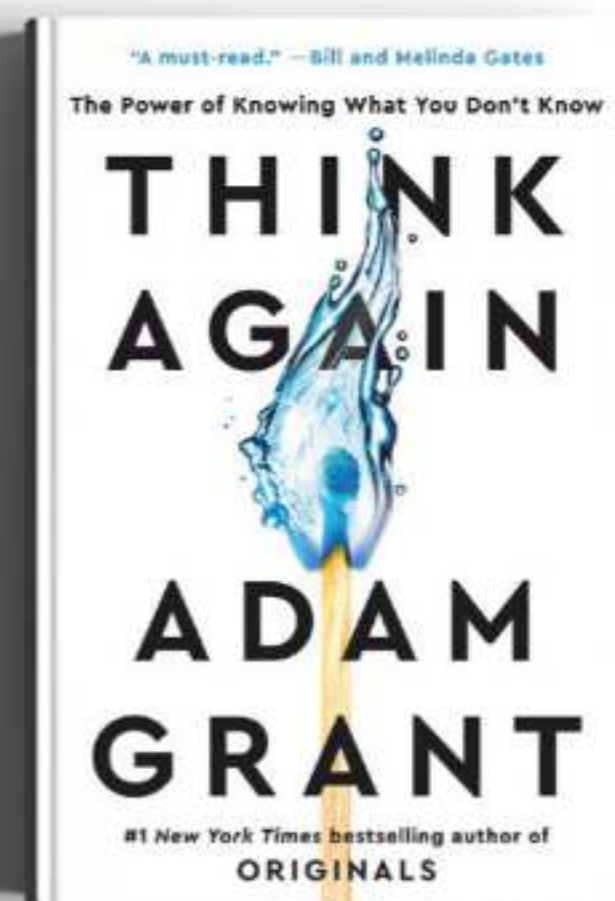
The Loneliest Polar Bear: A True Story of Survival and Peril on the Edge of a Warming World
By Kale Williams | March
\$28 | CROWN

This heartrending and true tale follows Nora, a polar bear cub left behind by her mother, Aurora, at the Zoo in Columbus, Ohio, and the group of people who worked furiously to keep her alive.



An Alternative History of Pittsburgh
By Ed Simon | April
\$16.95 | BELT PUBLISHING

Simon tells the story of the city and all the changes that made it what it is today in a way that's entirely new, by the hand of someone who is deeply familiar. Simon shines a light on things often forgotten, and uncovers untold stories in the process.



Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know

By Adam Grant | February | \$28 | VIKING

Renowned Wharton professor Grant spotlights one of the most important and impactful themes of our time: questioning one's own deeply held beliefs. Grant frames true knowledge as not knowing everything, but rather, listening as if we knew nothing at all in this intrepid book that is what our present moment requires.

*"Since losing my mother to pancreatic cancer,
my goal has been to ensure that everyone facing a pancreatic cancer
diagnosis knows about the option of
clinical trials and the progress being made."*

-Keesha Sharp



Photo By Brett Erickson

Stand Up To Cancer and Lustgarten Foundation are working together to make every person diagnosed with pancreatic cancer a long-term survivor.

To learn more about the latest research, including clinical trials that may be right for you or a loved one, visit [**PancreaticCancerCollective.org**](https://PancreaticCancerCollective.org).





01 New York Botanical Garden — New York City

This spring you can immerse yourself in the artist's fascination with the natural world at NYC's 250-acre living museum as she debuts a 16-foot bronze sculpture, *Dancing Pumpkin* (2020), an outdoor infinity mirrored room, *Illusion Inside the Heart* (2020) and a first-ever "obliteration greenhouse" installation.



02 Inhotim — Brumadinho, Brazil

One of Kusama's most iconic—and at first controversial—pieces is *Narcissus Garden*, which debuted at the 33th Venice Biennale in 1966. An installation of 1,500 plastic silver globes it was a jab at commercialization and repetition in the art world. Now the piece has been recreated all over the world, as it is here with 500 stainless steel spheres floating in a pond in one of Latin America's largest outdoor art centers.

03 The Tate Modern — London

Another show postponed due to COVID-19, Tate Modern's Kusama exhibition is scheduled to open in spring 2021. Her signature immersive infinity mirror rooms here will include *Filled With the Brilliance of Life* and *Chandelier of Grief*, a room of rotating crystal chandeliers, as well as photographs on display for the first time showing the history of her mirrored rooms.



06 Gropius Bau — Berlin

Lifelong as well as more recent fans can follow the trajectory of Kusama's seven decades of creative output with this comprehensive retrospective tracing her work from early paintings and rise in popularity in the mid-1960s to her lesser-known work in Germany and Europe, as well as debuting a new immersive infinity mirrored room.



05 Kistefos Museum — Jevnaker, Norway

The polka dotted tentacles of *Shine of Life* rise 20 feet out of a historic wood pulp mill inlet in the heart of Kistefos Museum's outdoor sculpture garden. A site-specific piece amidst woodland and water, it rests in good company: the 1,000-square-meter *Twist* gallery/bridge/sculpture is a stroll away.

04 Place François Mitterrand — Lille, France

Kusama's first public sculpture in Europe, *Les Tulipes de Shangri-La*, a creation taken from her *Flower Power* series, is a pop of color and joy that will stop you in your tracks amidst the dull grey cityscape of Lille's railway station.



ALL WORK © YAYOI KUSAMA. 01: COURTESY OF NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN; 02: NELSON ALMEIDA/AFP/GETTY; 03: TATE PRESENTED BY A PRIVATE COLLECTOR, NEW YORK 2019 04: BSIP/GETTY; 05: COURTESY OF TATE MODERN; 06: COURTESY OF GROPUS BAU, BERLIN 2019



07 Ota Fine Arts — Singapore

While Kusama is known for her bursts of color, the artist departs from her vibrant hues in *Recent Paintings*, on view at Ota Fine Arts in Singapore. Featuring 15 monochrome paintings, and *Clouds*, a sculpture installation of mirror stainless steel forms, this exhibit shows how her work has continued to evolve in recent years.



09 Yayoi Kusama — Museum

Tokyo
Opened in Shinjuku in late 2017, this is the first permanent museum dedicated to Yayoi Kusama, fittingly in her home country of Japan. The five-story museum let fans immerse themselves in all the struggles it took for Kusama to become an artist on the world stage.

08 Benesse House — Hotel

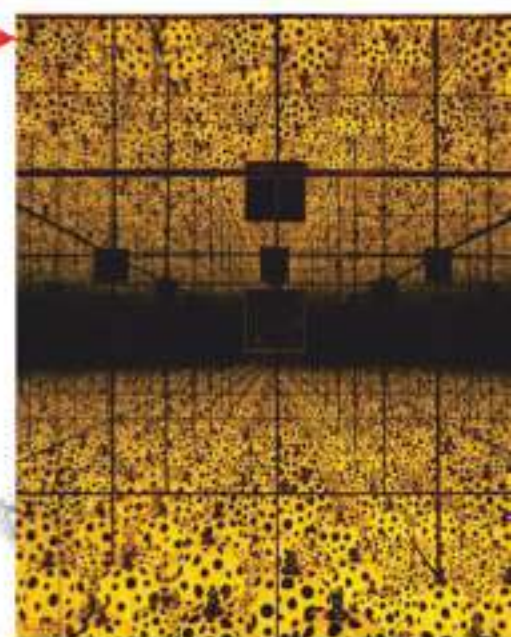
Naoshima, Japan

This yellow polka-dotted pumpkin on a pier is the unofficial symbol for Japan's contemporary art mecca. But you won't find this giant gourd in the ultra-modern metropolis of Tokyo; instead, it's on a small sparsely populated rural island in Japan's Seto Inland Sea.

10 National Gallery of — Australia

Canberra, Australia

Kusama is known for her love of a certain gourd. She's been drawn to pumpkins since she was a child and has attributed that to "their humorous form, warm feeling and a human-like quality." Step into her whimsical world with the *The Spirits of the Pumpkins Descended into the Heavens*, an immersive installation of black dots around a mirrored box.



UNCHARTED

Where to See Yayoi Kusama's Art Around the World

She's been dubbed the "world's favorite artist." But while images of her kaleidoscopic infinity rooms are hot on Instagram, she's no derivative newcomer to the art scene. This Japanese pop-art icon has been creating fresh work since the 1950s, and her creative output hasn't subsided. Now a nonagenarian who has voluntarily made a home for herself in a Tokyo psychiatric asylum, Yayoi Kusama continues to produce the signature larger-than-life polka-dotted pumpkins, reflective rooms and myriad other pieces that first captivated the world long before social media. This year, shows of her work that had been postponed in 2020 by the pandemic are scheduled to open, including the New York Botanical Garden's much anticipated "Cosmic Nature" exhibit. From Japan's rural islands to Berlin's avant-garde museums, this eccentric master's art work will be on display all over the world. —Kathleen Rellihan

PARTING SHOT

Jodie Foster

➔ JODIE FOSTER HASN'T MADE MANY POLITICAL FILMS BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT SO entertaining to her. "Everybody is born and then they die. There's nothing new about that." But all that changed for the Oscar-winner with her latest film *The Mauritanian* (in theaters and streaming on February 12), which tells the true story of Mohamedou Ould Salahi, who was held without being charged at Guantanamo Bay from 2002 until 2016 on allegations he was a member of Al-Qaeda. Foster plays defense attorney Nancy Hollander. "We let fear and terror discard the rule of law and discard our own humanity," says Foster, who adds it was the "first-person look at the life and the character of this Muslim man" that inspired her to do this film. "We were all there to serve his story," she says. Of course, getting that story out was more difficult because of the pandemic, the impact of which, Foster says, has accelerated what Hollywood has known for years: "There will be a major shift in audience habits and in the strength and power of streamers." But Foster says she's ready. "Look, I'm happy to act on an iPhone" [laughs].

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Why do you think this story is so relevant right now?

It's about a dark moment in our history as a country. We have these moments in time that we have to revisit and recognize our part in and see where our emotions got the best of us.

What was it about Nancy Hollander that stood out to you?

Most people don't know a lot about her. That allowed me to change parts of her character in order to serve Mohamedou's story. I had to basically say, "Look, she's going to be rude and short with people and self-protective." She's had to build walls of protection in order to uphold her mission.

Did the way you approach a role change after you started directing?

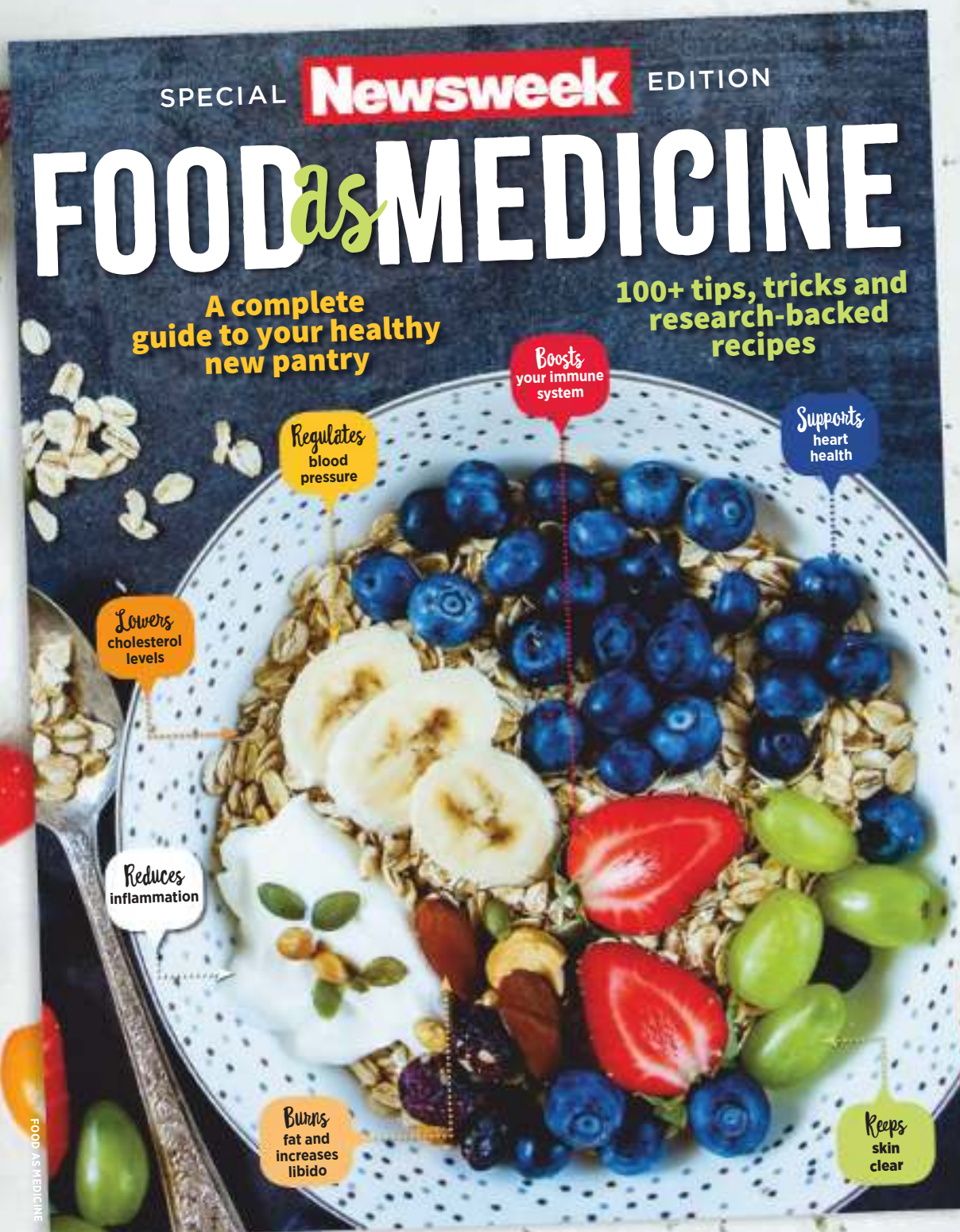
I remember being 6 or 7 on this television show and an actor who I'd been working with was the director that day. My mind was blown. So I always had my eye on that. How I've worked as an actor is a little bit like a director; it wasn't a big switch.

***The Silence of the Lambs*' 30th anniversary is coming up. Did you foresee it becoming such a classic?**

I'm kind of in awe of that movie. For me, it's the best movie I've ever made by far. It's timeless. But I have to also give credit to the Thomas Harris book because it was that text. Literally, Ted Tally's first draft was virtually the script that was shot. So it really did feel like there was something magical about it. —H. Alan Scott



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