

The Year in Misinformation

01.15.2021

Newsweek

President Trump has access to extraordinary powers—and **MILITARY OFFICERS ARE WORRIED**

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FEATURES

WEAPONIZED

A dangerous lie can get started on any keyboard. Some supposed news and information sites are committed to helping them spread as far as possible.

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Red Alert

Donald Trump's talk about martial law has the military secretly planning how to respond to possible chaos around the inauguration and transition.

BY WILLIAM M. ARKIN

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Facts did not always flourish in 2020. Web rating service NewsGuard names the last 12 months' worst (and best) online news sources.

BY GABBY DEUTSCH

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"This show is not really about high kicking minorities in the face like the original."



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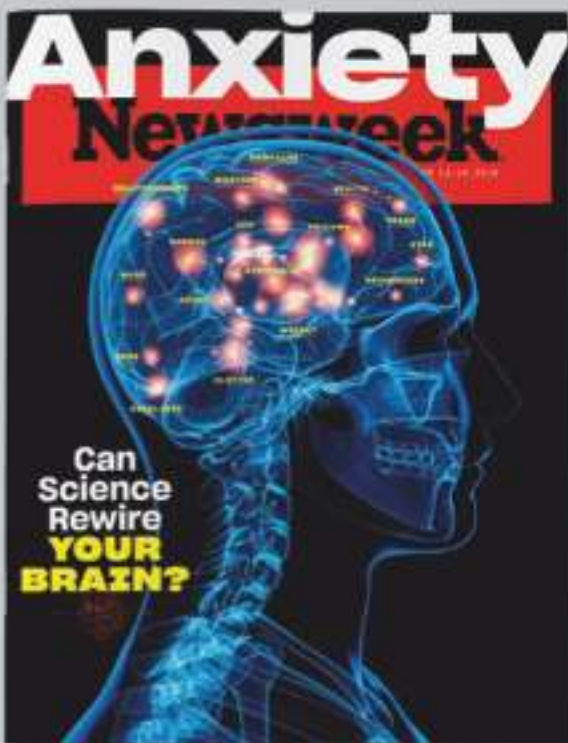
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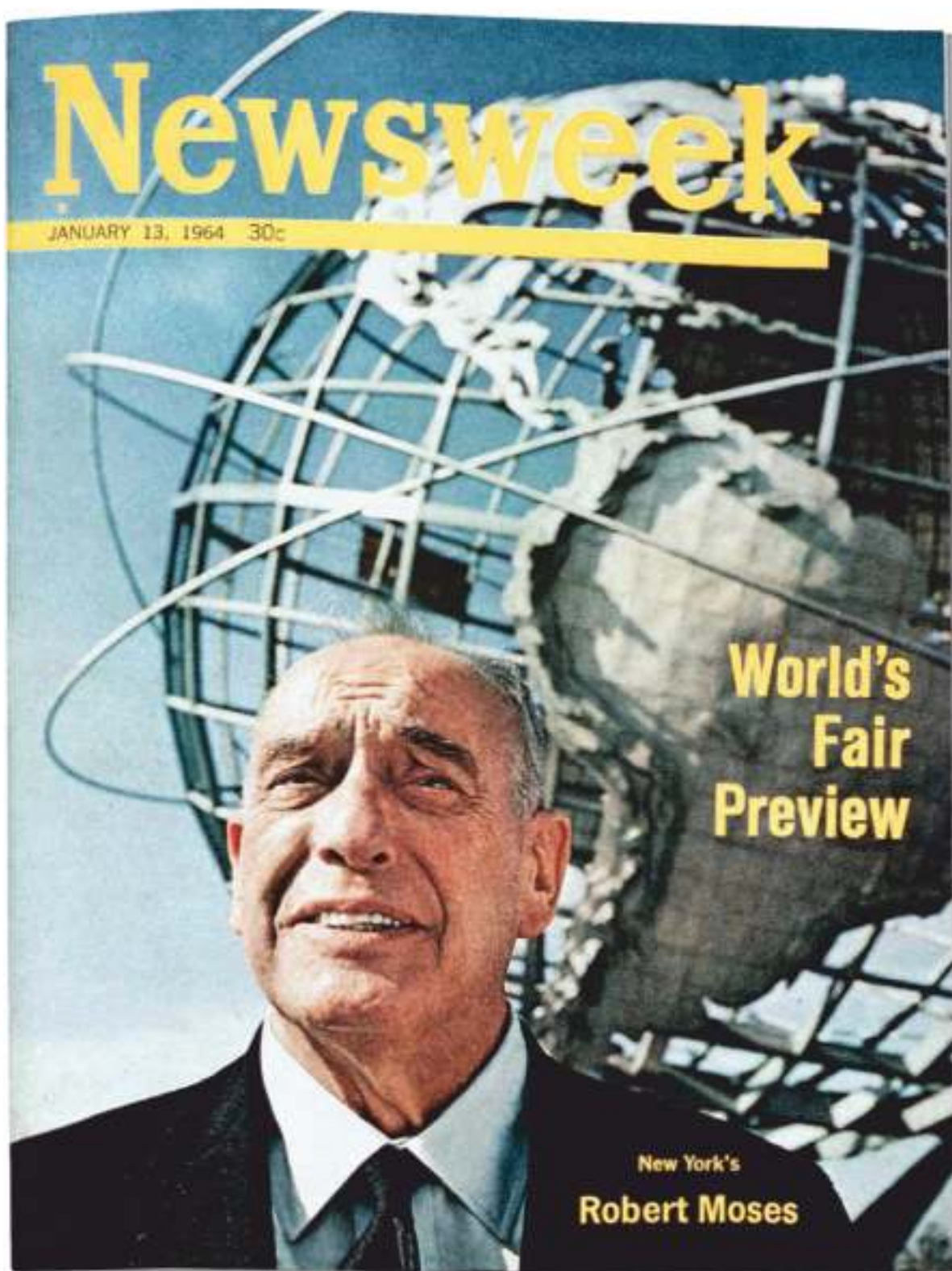
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The Archives

1964

According to *Newsweek*, an estimated 70 million visitors would attend “the costliest (\$1 billion), biggest, most controversial, most commercial, and probably most successful moneymaker since Prince Albert started the whole World’s Fair business by approving London’s Great Exhibition in 1851.” Some worried that “New York’s big bazaar has no unifying theme” due to its array of food, entertainment and events. In October, after a year’s postponement due to COVID-19, Expo 2020 Dubai will be the first World’s Fair held in the Middle East; its theme: “Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.”




1976

Newsweek described the first post-Watergate election as “a marathon...a long, tortuous route” to the White House after the turmoil of President Nixon resigning and being pardoned by his VP, Gerald Ford. Now, New York Attorney General Letitia James has predicted that President Trump could resign, allowing Mike Pence to pardon him.



2001

“We think we’re whispering, but we’re really broadcasting,” said *Newsweek* about how easy it is to view online private information. Thankfully, “there’s an antidote: cryptography.” Today, with social media giants collecting vast amounts of data and hacking growing even more sophisticated, privacy concerns are only increasing. 

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BANGKOK

Pandemic Spike

On December 25, a health worker in Thailand conducts a COVID-19 test. After keeping infection rates low for months, the total number of confirmed infections soared to more than 8,000 by January 4.

The results followed a major outbreak centered around Samut Sakhon province, where hundreds of migrant workers tested positive.

📷 SIRACHAI ARUNRUGSTICHAI

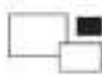


SYDNEY

The Show Goes On

New Year's Eve fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House on January 1, 2021. The city is typically one of the first to mark the New Year. According to NBC News, Sydney's celebrations, like those in most places, "were scaled back amid harsher restrictions on movement." But the show went on over the city's famous Opera House.

→ SAEED KHAN

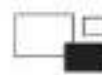


ZELLA-MEHLIS, GERMANY

Blessings

Completing a pledge made in April when there were under 5,000 deaths from COVID-19 nationwide, on December 30 Gertrud Schop lit candles in the shape of a cross for the approximately 32,000 victims. Schop pledged to continue until a vaccine became available.

→ JENS SCHLUETER

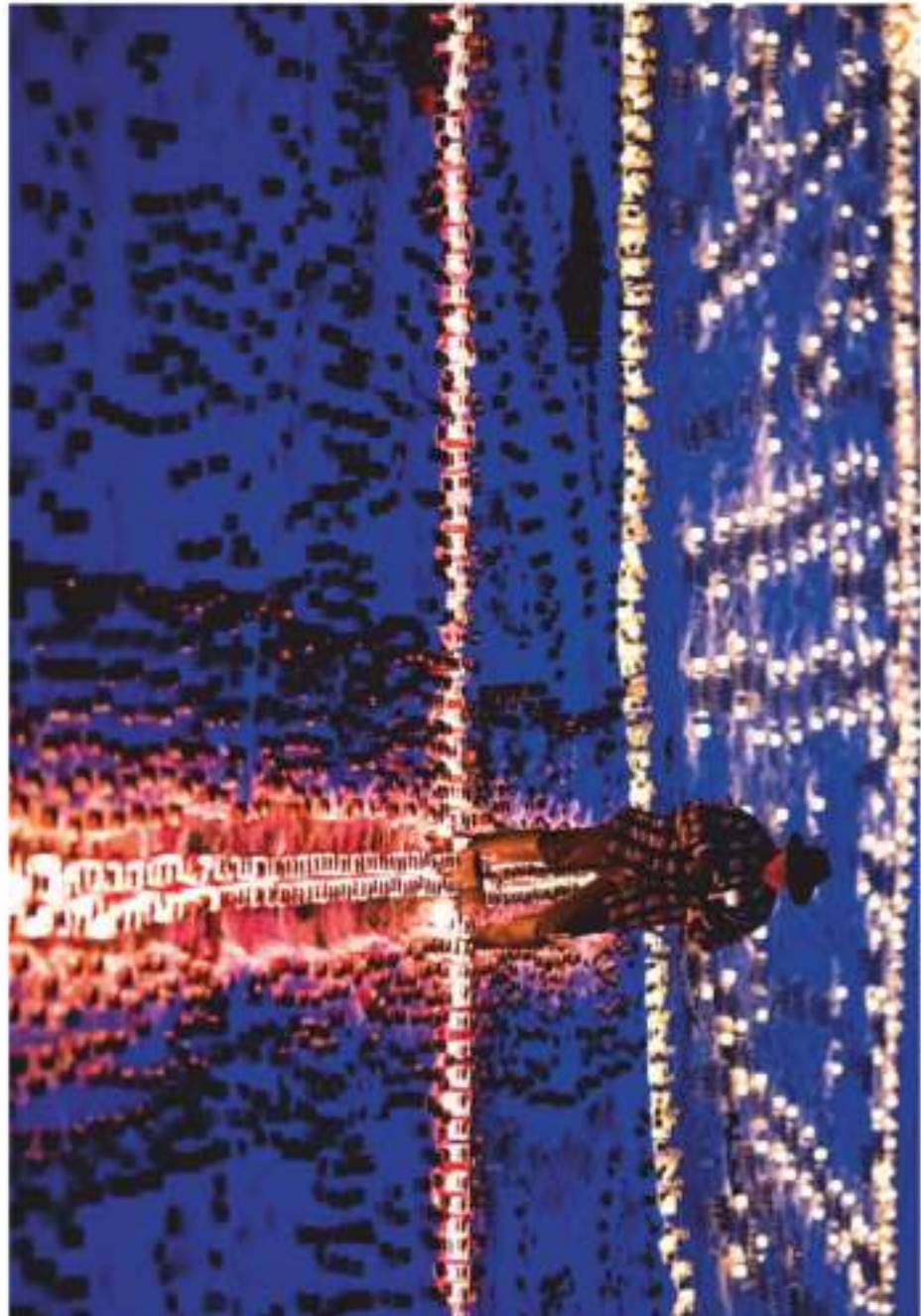


CHENNAI, INDIA

Remembrance

On December 26, family members paid homage to the victims of the tsunami 16 years ago on Pattinapakkam Beach. It was the day after Christmas, when a magnitude 9.1 earthquake triggered the tsunami off Sumatra Island, located in western Indonesia. It produced waves that topped almost 60 feet.

→ ARUN SANKAR





[THE DEBATE
Newsweek]

The Future of Liberalism

Should Democrats patiently try to win back working class voters or is it time for a braver leap?

**WATCH THAT
FIRST STEP**

In a bitterly divided country, there is a big difference between winning power and governing effectively.

"I was going to smile at each of the Sharks and look them in the eye." » P.16



JOHN LUND/GETTY; TOP RIGHT: ANDREW ECCLES/ABC/GETTY



GET BACK TO ECONOMIC BASICS

by Batya Ungar-Sargon

SOMETHING RATHER TELLING happened in early December, after the bipartisan "Problem Solvers Caucus" initially unveiled its new COVID-19 relief stimulus package. This new package, unlike its March predecessor, did not include any direct stimulus checks, nor did it include the crucial federal unemployment benefits that millions of out-of-work Americans have been relying on to feed their families through the COVID recession. In protest, two senators took to the Senate floor to introduce their own legislation that would dispense direct payments of \$1,200 to working-class American families. And just as the coalition that had omitted the checks had been bipartisan, so, too, was the pushback; the two senators were Democrat Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Republican Josh Hawley of Missouri.

The Talmud tells us that God always preempts a blow with what heals it, in this case seeding a new, bipartisan populism into the fertile grounds of the Senate's bipartisan abandonment of the working class. As such, it was a snapshot of American politics today: Many on both sides of the aisle have abandoned labor, while a precious few, also on both sides, seem to have recognized this fact and wish to remedy it. In other words, as is more often than

not the case in America, more unites us than divides us.

You would not know this from the rhetoric of our politicians and our media, where the other side is constantly vilified in Manichean terms. But the truth is, for decades now, the Democrats have replaced their erstwhile commitment to working-class Americans—to protecting their jobs, their families, their children's futures, their *dignity*—and have instead become the bastion of the educated. We are facing an impending national divide between an urban, college-educated liberal America and a rural, working-class conservative one.

Evidence for this cropped up most recently in the results of the presidential election. In 1980, the Democrats won just nine out of the 100 highest-income counties across the nation. In 2020, Biden won over half of them, along with a staggering 84 of the 100 counties where people are most likely to have a college degree (Trump won just 16). Compare this to 1980, when Democrats won just 24 of these counties—and the Republicans took a whopping 76 of them. It was the affluent and college-educated who delivered for Biden in Georgia, while the Democrats lost big with minorities—Muslims, Latinos and even Black men, who doubled their support for

Trump to 18 percent according to exit polls. Trump won a higher share of the Bronx, which is only 9 percent white, than he did of Manhattan.

As Chris Arnade put it, “while the racial gap is decreasing, the education gap is solidifying and becoming multiracial.” And yet, faced with the challenge of an increasingly diverse and alienated working class, the Democrats replied with rhetoric tailor-made for their new base—affluent, urban college grads. Faced with working-class Americans whose jobs had been outsourced to Mexico and China, they chanted “Abolish ICE!” and voted to decriminalize illegal border crossing. Faced with working-class Americans watching footage of cities being torn up by looting and rioting all summer, they vowed to “Defund the Police!” Faced with Americans who went to the polls in search of someone who would guarantee them a job and a paycheck in exchange for honest work, the Democrats chanted “Free College!” and vowed to abolish student loans.

These slogans were revealing. College-educated Americans are much less likely to live in a part of the city where they might *need* to call the police, and much less likely to work in an industry that might be threatened by someone who doesn’t speak English and can’t work legally. They certainly can’t envision a dignified life while employed in the service sector—and, of course, it is they who are saddled with student loans. Faced with the college divide, the Democrats preached to their choir; Trump was a white supremacist, they said over and over, while minorities in working-class neighborhoods were planning to vote for him.

Worse, Democrats called anyone who disagreed racist (“If ‘defund the police’ offends you, then I’m sure

‘abolish slavery’ would’ve offended you too,” read a popular and widely circulated tweet, though 81 percent of Black Americans told Gallup they wanted police to spend the same amount of time or more in their neighborhoods). For years now, but especially in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and the “racial reckoning” that followed it, we’ve been living through a moral panic around race. It stems from the mainstreaming of “critical race theory,” an academic framework recently popularized in bestselling books that casts race as the most important and immutable fact of American life, and racism our most stubbornly enduring scourge. So deeply entrenched is this line of thinking that people who dissent from it are mobbed online, cruelly shamed, chased out of their jobs and, in some cases, public life altogether. Persuasion—or the idea that one gains power by convincing other people that one is right—has been replaced by the fear of humiliation and joblessness.

These two aspects of liberal culture today—the narrowing of the focus to college-educated Americans and a moral panic perpetuated through woke sloganeering—are two

“We are facing an impending national divide between an urban, college-educated liberal America and a rural, working-class conservative one.”

sides of the same coin. It’s Angela Davis gracing the cover of *T Magazine*—and a Cartier watch being advertised on the back. It’s the Squad doing makeup tutorials and calling for total student debt cancellation—the benefits of which would go to the top 40 percent and would be shouldered by people standing in food lines or stealing baby formula because COVID took their jobs. It’s the Big Tech environmentalists taking their private jets to their climate change conferences—where they bray about banning fracking.

Policies like student loan forgiveness and open borders flatter the vanity of affluent liberals, masquerading as social justice while further burdening the working class.

If this is the future of American liberalism, liberals deserve to lose. Big.

Instead, what I believe the future of American liberalism *should* be is a movement that wields a power whose source is persuasion, and whose focus is on building a strong working class and restoring the dignity of every American.

In the writings of the German-Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt, power is not something that one person or group wields to oppress another, as it is in critical race theory. It is what is produced between people when one is persuaded by the other. This is how a political community is established, and where it gets its legitimacy, Arendt argued: “Power springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but it derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow.”

The way to pursue a politics that prioritizes the dignity of every American is not with clapbacks on Twitter, but by asking of each and every political and cultural issue: How does



MORE IN COMMON?

Clockwise from top left: Protesting in Los Angeles this September; President-elect Joe Biden; and Missouri Republican Senator Josh Hawley.



this look to working-class Americans? *This* is how you create power at the bottom to rival that of the billionaires and tech moguls at the top.

A politics that truly prioritizes the working class would abandon symbolic fights waged with maximalist slogans that seem designed to alienate even those who agree. Perhaps counterintuitively, a liberalism that was truly *liberal*—truly focused on debate, civil discourse, the consent of the governed and equality before the law—would be one that was much less overtly political. We have allowed politics to seep into every

aspect of our lives at the expense of knowing how to govern. Policies that most Americans agree upon—background checks for gun purchases, a public health care option, a \$15 minimum wage, the legalization of marijuana—seem impossibly out of reach. It's because along with abandoning the working class, liberals abandoned the desire to persuade; why bother, when you can just call your political opponents racist?

But a political community that derives its power from persuasion—for example, from persuading the working class that part of this

country's abundant cornucopia of blessings is still theirs for the having—would mean doing the opposite: recognizing what the actual problems are and finding those on the other side of the aisle willing to help solve them. It would mean recognizing the huge efforts Republicans have been making to end the carceral state, for example, or even their newfound desire to address police brutality. It would mean finding pro-union Republicans and joining hands with them to fight for the little guy against the mighty.

What this perspective will reveal is that while many Americans are liberal socially and economically, and many are conservative on both fronts, there are a lot of Americans—a lot of working-class Americans—who are socially conservative and economically liberal. Instead of discarding them for their values, instead of mocking their religious commitments or calling them racist, true liberals would seek to engage and better understand. With overwhelming consensus across the nation about issues like LGBTQ rights, the evils of racism and the importance of diversity, having respect for the worldview of the working class doesn't require abandoning civil rights. A bipartisan American populism can be used to realize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Beloved Community," through a politics that elevates above all else working Americans and the dignity of all Americans.

This what I hope is the future of liberalism and the Democratic Party. Whether that future will be realized is something I leave to others.

→ **Batya Ungar-Sargon** is opinion editor of *THE FORWARD*. Twitter: @bungarsargon. The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.



BOLDNESS, NOT MODERATION

by Issac Bailey

IN EARLY 2014, I ALMOST DIED. WEEKS earlier, I had been diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disease, CIDP. My white blood cells, for reasons that remain a mystery, began attacking the linings of my nerves. Over the course of months, my large muscle groups had been eaten away. I got so weak that I had trouble folding large towels. The worst days were when my wife had to push me around in a wheelchair as my nine-year-old daughter cried because “daddy can’t even walk.”

It wasn’t CIDP that nearly killed me. It was the initial treatment. It was aggressive. Day after day, I would visit a hospital, where medical officials would pump something called IVIG into my veins in a room where cancer patients were also being treated. The result: A 104-degree fever that wouldn’t break, multiple blood clots and a suspicion that my heart would be forever damaged even if I survived. Fortunately, we found a different aggressive treatment—steroids through an IV—that worked.

I’d do it again if I had to. When you are deathly ill, you know moderate measures can’t make you healthy. That’s why cancer patients consent to having poison and radiation pumped into their bodies. That’s why spouses agree to let doctors conduct risky emergency surgeries on their partners. That’s why those suffering from the worst effects of diabetes or flesh-eating bacteria willingly allow a doctor to cut off a limb,

knowing it could be the only way to save their lives.

In times of extreme distress, half-measures won’t do.

Fortunately, I got aggressive treatment when I needed it; over the past few years, I have gotten healthier and gone into CIDP remission. Unfortunately, during that same period, our democracy has gotten sicker and sicker, in large part because one of our two major political parties has gone crazy. Half-measures now will not return our democracy to a healthy state. Moderation in the face of extremism means extremism wins. It’s akin to trying to reason with a toddler in the middle of a tantrum. It’s impossible. And even if you believe the election of moderate Joe Biden is a return to order, if you do not undo the damage caused by the tantrum, the extremism that resulted from the tantrum becomes the new norm.

In 2016, we elected a narcissistic conspiracy theorist who had spent the previous five years spreading the bigoted lie that the nation’s first Black president wasn’t really American. Tens of millions of Americans looked at that and said he should lead us. During his term in office, he revealed himself to be even more bigoted and incompetent, and only concerned about himself—and even more Americans voted for him to have a second term in office than had voted for him the first time.

Those kinds of things don’t happen in a healthy country.

Armed men and women temporarily shut down the Michigan legislature because of COVID restrictions. Others allegedly planned to kidnap Michigan’s governor. And still other armed men and women went to the house of the secretary of state to demand that the election results be overturned.

A dozen-and-a-half Republican-led states, led by Texas, tried to nullify the votes of millions of Americans in four states that President Donald Trump lost in November. The Republican president has literally been calling on officials in various states to overturn the election results—even summoning a few of them to the White House to chat about it. The two Republican senators facing runoff elections in Georgia are supporting the president and those Republican attorneys general—and might be elected to the Senate anyway.

Kyle Rittenhouse has become a hero on the Right during an era in which white domestic terrorism is considered by some to be a bigger threat than ISIS or Al-Qaeda. The Republican Party broke every political tradition to steal a Supreme Court seat from a Democratic president in 2016, and four years later virtually locked in a conservative majority on the Supreme Court for a generation.

A significant chunk of the American public shrugs as upwards of 3,000 of our fellow citizens are killed a day by a virus Donald Trump once suggested could be cured by injecting Lysol inside people’s bodies.

We are sick. If a country could be diagnosed with cancer, we’d likely be in Stage 3 or Stage 4. Moderation is the wrong move by the Democratic Party during the Biden era.

The Republican Party wasn’t always this sick. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich was an ugly politician who was the spark for much of the

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ugliness we see in Washington today. But in the 1990s, when the GOP took control of the House, they had a plan to accomplish big things—welfare reform and balancing the budget chief among them. Of course they wanted to beat Bill Clinton, and eventually impeached him because Clinton couldn't keep his genitalia in his pants and lied about it under oath. But Republicans most strongly desired to reshape the country in their conservative image, and they never lost sight of that. They may have angered liberals, but their presence meant our two major political parties would be fighting over ideas and the direction of the country—which is healthy in a democracy. It meant we could stumble and bumble our way to compromise after bloody political fights.

The GOP today has no priority other than holding onto and wielding power for power's sake. The party didn't even bother putting together a platform during the 2020 Republican National Convention because they all knew, like everyone else paying attention, that it would have rung hollow. Even in 2009, when we were dealing with what was then the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the GOP prioritized regaining power over helping struggling Americans. Only three Republicans in the Senate voted for a desperately needed economic stimulus package, and only after ensuring it wouldn't be as large as it needed to be. Republicans cried foul at the suggestion that the Obama administration implement a massive mortgage forgiveness program to bail out everyday homeowners, just as major financial institutions had been bailed

out. All the while, the left wing of the Democratic Party was urging President Barack Obama to wake up and recognize that the Republican Party couldn't be negotiated with—because its only real goal was regaining power by opposing every Obama policy and nominee, no matter how moderate or sensible it might be. They didn't give a damn that Merrick Garland had long been seen as a consensus Supreme Court pick because of his impressive legal credentials and moderate profile. They didn't bat an eyelash at public opinion polls showing that 90 percent of Americans wanted comprehensive background checks for all gun sellers.

That was evidence of a deepening political sickness. That sickness has only grown worse. A sane, healthy country would never have elected a man like Donald Trump. A sane, healthy party would not have stuck

“They didn’t bat an eyelash at opinion polls showing that 90 percent of Americans wanted comprehensive background checks for all gun sellers.”




ANOTHER WORLD People gather in support of President Donald Trump at the Michigan State Capitol in Lansing on November 14, 2020.

with him these past four years and tried to give him another term. But the GOP is not a healthy party. And until that's remedied, little else will matter.

I'm not a hard leftist. My voting record, which has included Democrats, Republicans and independents up and down the ticket, would horrify those on the hard Left, just as they used to horrify me. But that was when this country was healthier. As my body grew stronger, doctors pulled back on my treatment. They became less aggressive—more moderate—by the month until I didn't need any treatment at all anymore.

That's how it should be. Moderation is designed to stabilize a thing and uphold the status quo. That's the last thing we need in a country as sick as ours. The hard Left can provide the aggressive treatment we need on issues such as real policing, immigration and health care reform. The hard Left can help us achieve pay equality and a living wage in a country that is suffering from the longest bread lines and shoplifting for baby food it has seen in decades. The Left provides an urgency we desperately need because it hates the status quo, and is willing to risk making things worse in the short term to produce a better future.

Obama's moderate approach led to significant accomplishments and the most progressive presidency in a generation. But that was when the GOP was semi-sane. He could have gotten even more done had he listened to the Left sooner. Biden better listen to them now. 

→ **Issac Bailey** is professor of public policy at Davidson College, a 2014 Nie-man fellow at Harvard University and author of *WHY DIDN'T WE RIOT? A BLACK MAN IN TRUMPLAND*. Twitter: @ijbailey. The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.

INTERVIEW

How to Get on *Shark Tank*—and Win!

An ex-volunteer firefighter appeared on the ABC show in November with hopes of striking a deal for her fitness product business. Here's how she fared—and lessons learned

ARE YOU A SMALL BUSINESS owner? A fan of ABC's *Shark Tank*? Ever wonder what it takes to get on the show and then, actually get a deal done with one of the Sharks like Mark Cuban or Lori Greiner?

I had no idea how, but I turned to someone who did: Sarah Apgar, a former volunteer firefighter from Long Island. She launched a company called FitFighter, featuring a new fitness device called the Steelhose. On the show, which was broadcast November 13, Apgar offered 15 percent of her company for \$250,000. She settled for 25 percent from guest Shark, and KIND bars creator, Daniel Lubetzky.

My interview with Apgar was featured on *Better*, *Newsweek's* interview series on LinkedIn Live [Thursdays, 9 a.m. ET/noon PT], where I talk with authors, business leaders and other thinkers to help us learn how to become a little bit better at what we do.

Here's what Apgar had to say about her *Shark Tank* experience, the lessons she learned and her tips for other aspiring entrepreneurs. Excerpts from our conversation have been edited.

How to Get on *Shark Tank*

There are a couple of ways that *Shark*

Tank finds its companies.

First, in the pre-COVID days, you could go to a public casting call and get [before] a *Shark Tank* producer [go to abc.com for info]. The casting calls are on hiatus now, [but] I'm sure those will start up again in 2021. What you can also do is submit an online submission—a video and an application explaining what your product, idea or service or company is. They review, from my understanding, over 30,000 companies and ideas every year.

I got a phone call at the end of May, after I had launched a new line of home gym sets and training programs,

which would help people needing to stay fit at home. We pivoted, like everyone else, and started to serve people right in their living rooms. And I think that was one of the attractions to the *Shark Tank* producer team. They called us and said, 'We love the story here. We love that this is now available to the general public, and we'd love to feature you on the show.'

So what ensued was six to eight weeks of fast and furious interviews and business documentation, and all kinds of interactions with the *Shark Tank* [production] team. It was a really cool experience.

BY

DORIE CLARK

[@dorieclark](https://twitter.com/dorieclark)



How to Get Ready for Showtime

During this six- to eight-week time—from the time I got that very first phone call until the time that I was standing there pitching in front of those five Sharks—I really engaged in a planned day-to-day, week-over-week, series of mindset and presentation preparation. That included a business and industry coach. She took me through meditations in the mornings [and] practice sessions that were timed so I wouldn't get exhausted. [We also did] question and answer preparation in which



we categorized questions based on business information, industry information and the research that we did about the show and the interest of those [Shark] investors.

At the same time, you work with the producers on the pitch and the wardrobe. For me, it was just a dream way to present. But you get one shot only. And I love all that comes with that—all of those beautiful elements of preparation. I mean, that's life. This was the big limelight; the national stage—the ultimate culmination of all of those things that

I talk about as part of our mission 'readiness' mantra with FitFighter. So for me, this was really living out a lot of the elements of what I teach and the training that we provide.

“And if nothing else, if we crashed and burned and face-planted after that, by golly, that was going to be dynamite.”

Nail the Two-Minute Drill

For me, the single most challenging thing was to prepare; to think about your own personal strengths and limitations. And when I say limitations, I just mean the challenges we deal with based on our strengths, our personality, the way we present and who we are. One of my limitations is that I'm a talker; I'm very verbose. It's one of my best assets. But it can also [be] my biggest weakness during a presentation.

I knew that in [this] setting, you had to be concise—and say things one time and provide one piece of information. And then, not say it again...that's something that, for me, [was] a huge challenge. But I knew also that I would really nail that initial two-minute pitch where I had the limelight.

I knew no [Shark] was going to interrupt me, and I could just go out there and shine without interruption. So what I did is make sure that I spent a lot of my preparation time really on those first two minutes, knowing that I was going to own that. And if nothing else, if I crashed and burned and face-planted after that, by golly, that [two minutes] was going to be dynamite.

Prep Hard for Shark Questions

What I did was spend more of my time, probably 60 percent, preparing for the question-and-answer period, because that was going to be where I was going to struggle and trip up. I practiced that role. I had friends and family ask me questions and actually treat the preparation like the stage. I created a dress rehearsal where I would say things, [give] answers and get feedback. And over time, I'd get more and more comfortable with what, for me, was a big limitation. And I'm here to say if you think you



BETTER


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DEALMAKER “When I walked into the Shark Tank,” says Sarah Apgar, “I knew the metrics of my business; the basic numbers. I was an expert.”

What I Learned

There’s two things I wish that I’d done differently. One, is pushing back [on the Sharks]. Some people don’t realize that the seven to 10 minutes we see on TV is much longer [segment] in person. And during those conversations, there were a couple of times when I felt I had been either misrepresented or misunderstood.

Going back, if I had the chance to have a private conversation with a couple of those folks in person, I would make a clarification or I would push back on something I felt I was misunderstood, which is my responsibility; of course, it’s our responsibility to ensure that we’ve communicated in the best way we can. So that’s the first thing.

And the second is that I [wish I] had more cogently been able to communicate the long game and the long-term mission, which now, I’m able to communicate much better. I’m working on it. I didn’t do a good job...of explaining [our long-term vision]. And fortunately, the editors of the *Shark Tank* segment did this remarkable job...I was so touched by the way that they told the story and pieced it together. But I think I could have done a little better job. And so, if I continue to get a chance to, I’m going to get better and better at that. 

→ **Dorie Clark**, author of *ENTREPRENEURIAL YOU* and Duke University Fuqua School of Business professor, hosts NEWSWEEK’s weekly interview series, *BETTER*, on Thursdays at 12 p.m. ET/9 a.m. PT. Learn more and download her free *Stand Out* self-assessment.

have a limitation...you can improve on that just enough so that you can shine.

Know Your Numbers

When I walked into the Shark Tank, I knew the metrics of my business; the basic numbers. I was an expert. You best know your product, your service, your customers, your teammates, your industry, your market. I guarantee you know those things better than anybody else.

Dealing With Stage Fright in the Tank

As a practical matter, some of those techniques I mentioned, like the meditation ahead of time and practicing two to three times that day. Not 20, 30 or 200 times that day. That’s a great way to exhaust yourself and your mind. And then really dress rehearsing with all of the exact scenarios.

So I knew that I was going to have

“But you do get one shot, and you get one shot only. And I love all that comes with it.”

to stand for 30 seconds while all the cameras swirled around me. They had told me that. Standing and staring awkwardly at each of the sharks.

And so, I had planned what to do in that 30 seconds. I had planned that I was going to smile at each of the Sharks and look them in the eye. And then, I was going to look straight ahead at a spot that wasn’t looking them in the eye and just go neutral with my face. And I prepared what I was going to do with my posture and my body. And it worked, those 30 seconds flew by as if they were nothing, because I just did exactly what I had planned to do.

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TECHNOLOGY

Beware the Copycats

Following the Nashville Christmas Day bombing, conspiracy theories and attacks related to 5G technology are growing in size and intensity—and finding connections with the pandemic

THE THEORY THAT FEARS OF 5G technology might have been behind the Nashville bombing on Christmas Day has prompted federal, state and local law enforcement officials to focus on the possibility of additional or copycat threats to U.S. telecommunications infrastructure, according to restricted government threat warnings exclusively obtained by *Newsweek*.

Domestic intelligence agencies have warned that conspiracy theorists might attack “critical infrastructure,” including the electrical grid

near vulnerable quarantine areas, health care facilities, government buildings and 5G cell towers.

Anti-5G conspiracies have steadily grown since 2016, when telecommunications companies began installing Fifth Generation (5G) wireless technology infrastructure throughout America. Social media has been awash with conspiracy theories about 5G, a movement that has grown in size and intensity with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first large 5G

TECH BACKLASH As more cell towers are updated to handle speedier 5G networks (left), protests against the new technology have grown (bottom right).

networks were activated in 2018. The nationwide buildout will eventually include thousands of new towers and small cells (signal relays) on pre-existing infrastructure.

Early in 2020, conspiracy theories about 5G technology were considered the greatest domestic threat to critical infrastructure, according to homeland security reports. As U.S. domestic intelligence agencies increasingly focused on the threat last April, anti-5G sentiments were already thought to be responsible for almost 200 attacks in the U.K. and the Netherlands. Through the first half of 2020, there were more than 80 attacks on cellphone towers in the two countries as well as over 100 additional incidents involving arson attacks on telecommunications infrastructure or cases where 5G workers were harassed.

The Link to COVID

IN THE UNITED STATES, TENNESSEE HAS been a particular hotbed of anti-5G activity, leading the FBI to initially suspect that this was the motive for Anthony Warner’s intentional demolition of his RV in front of the AT&T building in downtown Nashville. Last December 4, according to reporting from the Bureau, arson caused an estimated \$120,000 in damages after fire was set to several cellphone towers in the Memphis area, the first 5G physical attacks in America. Through February 17, four additional 5G cell tower attacks occurred in Tennessee, and local fire departments investigated more than a half dozen additional arsons in March and April, many of the latter attacks now connected to COVID-19 and an anti-5G constituency obsessed with a

BY

WILLIAM M. ARKIN

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5G-COVID-19 connection.

The Fire Department of New York (FDNY) issued a “Watchline” report in April explaining that: “The online conspiracy consists of false information that 5G electromagnetic energy suppresses the immune system by breaking apart chemical bonds in DNA and that in the presence of bacteria can cause human cells to release free radicals.” According to domestic threat reports, other 5G conspiracy theories suggest that the cell signal weakens the respiratory system, leaving people susceptible to becoming infected by the novel coronavirus.

As part of its reporting on COVID-19 “Disinformation Activity,” the Department of Homeland Security included anti-5G chatter and activity as growing and dangerous in May. Their reporting said the internet was awash with “false narratives” that said that the technology “suppresses immune systems and that 5G spectrum bands spread the virus.”

Secretly, at the same time, the Department of Homeland Security was monitoring social media activity—including encrypted sites—which, they reported, were showing a marked COVID-related uptick in threats against 5G technology. On Twitter, suspected U.S.-based individuals were using the hashtag “burn them down” and threatening or inciting arson attacks.

“YOU THINK ITS A CORONAVIRUS OUT THERE ITS THE 5G TOWERS TAKE EM DOWN,” an April 8 DHS report quoted one social media poster as saying.

On an unnamed “encrypted messaging channel,” Homeland Security also reported that Islamic State (ISIS) supporters were circulating messages and images encouraging Muslims to destroy 5G infrastructure and attack non-believers “in the name of Allah.”

The Russian-owned news media station RT America also posted a YouTube video of a news report repeating the purported health risks associated with 5G technology.

A Growing Threat

ON MAY 12, THE NYPD CIRCULATED A comprehensive “Law Enforcement Sensitive” threat warning on 5G, saying that “conspiracy theories about the purported dangers of 5G technology may increasingly resonate with racially

and ethnically motivated violent extremists (REMVEs), anti-government malicious actors, and ideologically-unaffiliated individuals susceptible to disinformation campaigns.” The report cited data from studies of online posts across Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other sites saying that there had been one million mentions between January 1 and April 20 saying that 5G technology actually caused COVID-19. The report noted, “The data also indicated an overlap between anti-vaccination and 5G conspiracies, suggesting that some 5G conspiracy theorists may ultimately refuse a COVID-19 vaccine.”

Since then, the DHS’s Homeland Security Information Network, an intelligence-sharing platform, has circulated more than 400 reports on the threat of 5G conspiracies, almost all of them warning of conspiracy theories circulating amongst “far-right” users. Those reports refer to the “Stop 5G”

“The online conspiracy consists of false information that 5G electromagnetic energy suppresses the immune system.”



movement, the most prominent campaign against the technology of having more than 50,000-plus members across multiple social media platforms. One such instigator is the so-called “Deep State Mapping Project,” which has compiled a 5G-focused COVID word chart and other infographics detailing 5G symptoms and claiming a vast conspiracy tying 5G to every other known theory and culprit.

And 5G has also become a rallying cry for COVID-19 naysayers, extremists and anti-vaxxers to whip up support for their causes or just to provide general chaos, the Department of Homeland Security says.

On May 1, a cell tower in the Philadelphia Navy Yard had a small, accidental fire caused by a transformer spark. Three days later, a U.S.-based

anarchist group, self-described as the “Bristling Badger Brigade,” claimed responsibility, saying that it targeted the tower due to concerns over 5G. The FBI concluded that this was a false claim, and that the group intended to spur others to attack telecommunications infrastructure.

A user on a U.S.-based neo-Nazi “Vorherrschaft Division’s” private Telegram group wrote that the health crisis “is the perfect time to

launch a widespread psychological warfare campaign,” saying that fellow users should leverage “hysteria over 5G spreading” to stimulate panic and violence.

“We assess conspiracy theories linking the spread of COVID-19 to the expansion of the 5G cellular network are inciting attacks against the communications infrastructure,” the DHS Counterterrorism Mission Center reported in a “for official use only” report on May 13, predicting that such threats “probably will increase as the disease continues to spread, including calls for violence against telecommunications workers.”

But then, domestic security analysts say, the George Floyd protests and the presidential election shifted focus and energy away from the burgeoning anti-5G activity. Anti-5G postings began to be censored by the big social media companies. This prompted a shift, DHS now says, to anti-5G agitators migrating to underground Telegram chat sites and the Russian social media platform VKontakte (VK), which began supplanting U.S. social media in September, bringing the active anti-5G threat back into play.

Another “law enforcement sensitive” critical infrastructure threat report also called out “social media influencers and celebrities who have become adherents to these conspiracy theories and are spreading the message as well to their respective audiences.”

“The FBI’s assumption of a 5G connection wasn’t coincidental nor completely baseless,” a Homeland Security analyst told *Newsweek*. The analyst requested anonymity because he is not authorized to speak on the ongoing investigation. “But the anti-5G movement is strong, and its meld with anti-vaxxers and MAGA supporters is sure to cause many headaches in the months and years ahead.”

“In the United States, Tennessee has been a particular hotbed of anti-5G activity.”



THE AFTERMATH The FBI and first responders work at the scene of the Christmas Day bombing in Nashville. Some officials have suggested that fear of 5G technology was behind the destruction.

Talking Points

Los Angeles Times

"Soon, there won't be any places for these ambulances to go."

—DR. CHRISTINA GHALY, L.A. COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTOR

AP

"THE CONFLUENCE OF COVID INTO THE PROTESTS INTO ALL OF THE DEBATE ABOUT DEFUNDING THE POLICE—I CAN'T IMAGINE A DARKER PERIOD."

—NEW YORK CITY POLICE COMMISSIONER DERMOT SHEA

Dermot Shea

VARIETY

"I hope that people will remember her the way that I do—always with a smile on her face."

—TINA LOUISE ON THE DEATH OF HER GILLIGAN'S ISLAND CO-STAR DAWN WELLS

People

"I have thanked the Lord hundreds of times that I wasn't out in the middle of Texas on a tour bus, miles away from a hospital. It was a major blessing I didn't have a heart attack."

—RICKY SKAGGS AFTER QUADRUPLE BYPASS

Ricky Skaggs

The New York Times

"I THINK I'D SEEN THE DA VINCI CODE BEFORE, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHO HE WAS. I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST SOME ACTOR."

—Actress Helena Zengel, 12, on being cast opposite Tom Hanks in *News of the World*



Helena Zengel



"Give the people \$2000."

—PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

Atlantic

"ON A PURELY SOCIAL LEVEL, I DON'T KNOW THAT REPORTING CRITICALLY ON JOE BIDEN WILL FEEL AS SAFE FOR REPORTERS. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET YASS QUEEN-ED TO DEATH."

—Journalist Olivia Nuzzi



RED

Donald Trump's talk about martial law has the military secretly planning how to re

JOE SOHM/VISIONS OF AMERICA/UNIVERSAL IMAGES
GROUP/GETTY; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY NEWSWEEK



TENSIONS RISING

As the transition to a Biden presidency gets closer, military officials grow increasingly worried about what Donald Trump might do to stay in power. In over 40 years, says one officer, "I've never seen the discussions that are being had right now."

respond to possible chaos around the inauguration and transition *by* WILLIAM M. ARKIN

ALERT

PENTAGON AND WASHINGTON-area military leaders are on high alert, wary of what President Donald Trump might do in his remaining days in office. Though far-fetched, ranking officers have discussed what they would do if the president declared martial law. And military commands responsible for Washington, D.C., are engaged in secret contingency planning in case the armed forces are called upon to maintain or restore civil order during the inauguration and transition period. According to one officer who spoke to *Newsweek* on condition of anonymity, the planning is being kept out of sight of the White House and Trump loyalists in the Pentagon for fear that it would be shut down.

"I've been associated with the military for over 40 years and I've never seen the discussions that are being had right now, the need for such discussions," says a retired flag officer, currently a defense contractor who has mentored and advised his service's senior leaders. He was granted anonymity in order to speak without fear of reprisal.

A half-dozen officers in similar positions agree that while there

is zero chance that the uniformed leadership would involve itself in any scheme to create an election-related reversal, they worry that the military could get sucked into a crisis of Trump's making, particularly if the president tries to rally private militias and pro-Trump paramilitaries in an effort to disrupt the transition and bring violence to the capital.

"Right now, because of coronavirus," one retired judge advocate general says, "the president actually has unprecedented emergency powers, ones that might convince him—particularly if he listens to certain of his supporters—that he has unlimited powers and is above the law."

The Likeliest Risks

"MARTIAL LAW," SAYS THE LAWYER, "IS THE WRONG paradigm to think about the dangers ahead."

Though such a presidential proclamation could flow from his order as commander-in-chief, an essential missing ingredient is the martial side: the involvement and connivance of some cabal of officers who would support the president's illegal move.

Such a group doesn't exist, he and other experts agree, but there could still be room for mischief, confusion and even use of military force. It would just not be in the way Trump might intend, particularly if he continues his quest to destabilize the democratic process.

"There is no role for the U.S. military in determining the outcome of an American election," Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy and Army Chief of Staff General James McConville said in a joint statement last Friday.

Yet while the Pentagon officially responded to *Newsweek's* queries with various quotes from defense leaders that the military has no role to play in the outcome of the election, it declined to address post-election crises or the discussions of martial law, referring questions to the White House. The White House then declined to comment.

Similarly, officers who were willing



POINTS OF VIEW

"There is no role for the U.S. military in determining the outcome of an American election," Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy (inset) and Army Chief of Staff General James McConville (left) say. Some Trump supporters—the group above were protesting COVID-19 restrictions last May in Pennsylvania—may feel differently.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: BEATA ZAWRZEL/NURPHOTO/GETTY; MONICA KING/HJ.U.S. ARMY; MARK WAKELA/GETTY



“Martial law is the **WRONG PARADIGM** to think about the dangers ahead.”

to speak about the subject insisted on anonymity, because they were concerned that use of their names might provoke the ire of the president. They feared that publicly stated opposition to the president’s scheme to undermine the election—whether that is to proclaim martial law, to seize voting machines or even to halt Congress from ratifying state electors’ results on January 6—could actually embolden Donald Trump to act.

“At this point there’s no telling what the president might do in the next month,” says a former Northern Command (NORTHCOM) commander, one who has been intimately involved in the development of domestic civil planning. “Though I’m

confident that the uniformed military leadership has their heads screwed on right, the craziness is unprecedented and the possibilities are endless.” The retired flag officer also requested anonymity because he is actively advising senior officers and is not authorized to speak on the record.

In some ways the military has already gotten dragged into the issue. Retired Lt. General Michael Flynn, President Trump’s first national security advisor and a recently pardoned felon, publicly broached the subject of martial law on the conservative channel Newsmax in late December, saying that the president should use the military to seize voting boxes and “rerun” the election in certain states.



“The president is not a lawyer and he doesn’t pay attention to details, but he is also fascinated with the of the presidency that are available to him.”

SECRET LEVERS

“He could take military capabilities and he could... basically rerun an election,” Flynn said. “The president has to plan for every eventuality because we cannot allow this election and the integrity of our election to go the way it is.” Flynn’s suggestion has been openly condemned by numerous retired officers. Lt. Col. Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, said on MSNBC that Flynn was a “disgrace to his uniform.”

After his television remarks, Flynn was invited to the Oval Office over the weekend, according to *The New York Times* and CNN, where he repeated his proposal. Since then, top aides have shot down the president’s musings, and military sources point

out that none of these discussions have included the Pentagon, and that no one in the military supports any use of the armed forces to keep Donald Trump in office.

Emergency Powers in Action

OFFICIALS WILLING TO SPEAK ABOUT THE MARTIAL law discussions, and to speculate about the president’s state of mind, however, are quick to point out that in March the president said he had “the right to do a lot of things that people don’t even know about.”

That statement came a day before the president declared a COVID-19 national emergency on March

REPLAY? NO WAY

The election is over (above, workers in Atlanta place voting machines in storage). But former national security advisor and pardoned felon Michael Flynn (top right) has suggested Trump could use military might to rerun the vote. Many have condemned that view, including the former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

13, a state that continues to this day as specified in three laws—the Public Health Service Act, the Stafford Act and the National Emergencies Act.

The Public Health Service Act is a 1944 statute that affords the president broad powers to mandate and enforce a nationwide quarantine. The Stafford Act, created mostly for natural disasters, allows the president to move to alleviate a local civil emergency without a request from a governor (that is, when he certifies that the primary responsibility for whatever the emergency is rests with the federal government). There is no aspect of either of these first two statutes that involves the military in any way.

The National Emergencies Act, on the other hand, could be more problematic if Trump chose to invoke it. It generally gives the president nearly unlimited discretion in defining the conditions of a national emergency. President George W. Bush declared a national emergency under this act after the September 11 terrorist attacks in 2001. President

Barack Obama declared a national emergency with regard to cybersecurity on April 1, 2015, a declaration still in effect. In both the Bush and Obama declarations, the presidents specified what authorities they were granting to government agencies and departments, mostly to redirect funds. And since then, a February 15, 2019 declaration of national emergency has been used by President Trump to divert defense construction dollars to pay for the southern border wall.

Though the National Emergencies Act does not itself provide specific powers—it merely allows the president to implement other statutes—experts worry that Trump and his loyalist supporters might imagine that the Act allows him to invoke extraordinary powers when in fact there is no precedent behind such a move.

And though President Trump himself last month tweeted “Martial law = Fake News” the day of *The New York Times* report, officials who have served in the Trump White House say that his reference to “things that people don’t even know about” portends true dangers, as the president indeed does have secret powers and has been fascinated with their existence. Military officers and National Security Council officials with direct knowledge of the early coronavirus deliberations at the White House say Trump was briefed by his national security team on a broad range of extraordinary powers available to him, including secret military plans to suppress civil disturbances in the “National Capital Region” and extraordinary powers contained in Top Secret continuity of government plans, both first revealed in *Newsweek*.

“The president is not a lawyer and he doesn’t pay attention to details, but he is also fascinated with the secret levers of the presidency that are available to him,” says a former National Security Council staffer who spoke with *Newsweek* off the record because he is not formally authorized to discuss the highly classified plans. Contained in the various packages briefed in the Oval Office during the early months of COVID-19, he says, were discussions of so-called Presidential Emergency Action Documents. PEADs originated during the darkest days of the Cold War conflict and are proclamations, executive orders, presidential messages and draft legislation that are ready for submission to Congress, prepared and approved by the White House,





A CHAOTIC SCENE

The military hopes to avoid the kind of mayhem and violence that ensued after the killing of George Floyd last spring. Here, demonstrators confront the Secret Service and Park Police officers at a protest-turned-ugly outside of the White House on May 30.

ERIC BARADAT/AFP/GETTY



the Justice Department and Congressional lawyers.

A separate presidentially-activated code word exists to implement each of some five dozen PEADs—the documents already dispersed amongst various departments and government agencies. Those codes are contained in the same satchel—the so-called “football”—that holds the president’s nuclear authenticators and is carried by military aides who are always with the president. In other words, such orders for extraordinary powers have been regularly briefed to President Trump and are only an arm’s length away.

Officials caution that none of the PEADs are applicable to any election scenario. But the little-known directives were reviewed to update them for coronavirus, to take into consideration the possibility of a countrywide breakdown in conditions other than war. During that review, some 60 documents circulated in a very small government circle of lawyers and emergency specialists: some of the PEADs themselves, some national security-related interagency agreements, some lower-level “major emergency actions,” emergency action “packages” and draft presidential proclamations.

One of the PEADs—they are organized into seven broad lettered categories, each on a different topic—addresses martial law. That document, according to a former Justice Department lawyer who was involved in an Obama administration review of the entire sheaf of PEADs, is probably the only explicit government statement setting out a domestic application of such a presidential proclamation. The PEAD, sometimes referred to as Directive 20, confers upon the Secretary of Defense powers to maintain public order, ensure public safety and enforce federal, state and local laws. It also directs the Defense Secretary to form an interim government.

The former Justice official cautions, though, that Directive 20 assumes that the United States has been subjected to armed attack and is suffering millions of deaths, that Washington has been destroyed, and that state and local governments are paralyzed, with essential services disrupted.

“Of course Directive 20 can’t be implemented, both because the conditions aren’t present and the military wouldn’t go along,” the former official says.

More applicable to the current situation, he says, is the PEAD that allows for “proclaiming the



FROM TOP: DREW ANGERER/GETTY; CHEN MENGTONG/CHINA NEWS SERVICE/GETTY

“Right now, because of coronavirus, the president ones that

existence of an unlimited national emergency.” Executive orders, he says, already exist that define a “national security emergency” as including military attack, natural disaster, a technological calamity and “other emergencies” that threaten the national security of the United States. “The entire apparatus is both meticulous and highly ambiguous,” the official says. He declined to speak on the record because the subject matter—PEADs and emergency powers—is so highly classified.

What Martial Law Would Entail

MARTIAL LAW, ACCORDING TO BLACK’S LAW Dictionary, “exists when military authorities carry on government or exercise various degrees of control over civilians or civilian authorities in domestic territory.” According to longstanding federal rules, the condition of “public necessity” mirrors that of Directive 20: that is, that there be extraordinary conditions necessitating military involvement, and that the duration of martial law and its purpose be clearly stated.

Military lawyers say that threats to public safety and order have to exist beyond the capacity of the federal government or state and local



POWER ON DISPLAY

Trump has long been “fascinated with the secret levers of the presidency,” a former staffer says—including the nuclear launch codes that are carried in a case by an aide (left) wherever the commander in chief goes. Still, his days in the White House are numbered.

government to resolve. But they point out that in Portland, Oregon, and other cities across America, the Department of Homeland Security has already declared that the local governments have lost control, necessitating federal intervention, even without the state’s permission. That precedent could embolden the White House to believe it has the right to act.

So it’s also conceivable that in the District of Columbia a commander could independently invoke martial law to restore order were there a complete breakdown. All the sources *Newsweek* spoke to, from the Pentagon military leadership down to the Joint Task Force already activated for coronavirus and used to suppress the George Floyd riots, agree that such a declaration is unlikely—that is, unless

there is an armed rebellion undertaken on behalf of Donald Trump.

To guide the Pentagon’s preparation of civil disturbance contingency plans, the Department of Justice prepared a legal analysis of peacetime martial law that further questions its relevance in the presidential transition. The classified memorandum, reviewed by *Newsweek*, calls use of the term “martial law” improper in cases of law enforcement, concluding that there is neither a Constitutional nor statutory definition that applies. The military might be used to perform judicial functions, the memo says, but the substitution of the military for civilian control is lawful only when unrecognized enemy governments—something like the Confederate States, for example, or a deposed and defeated government on foreign territory—no longer exists.

Still, the tangle of contingency plans, continuity of government procedures, secret presidential directives and even unknown powers, experts say, is now partially responsible for the current state of affairs and form a real basis for any anxiety that Donald Trump could do anything to cause even more chaos in the coming weeks.

“The greatest danger is that the very existence of these layers of secret directives might convey the impression of powers and authorities that don’t really exist in peacetime,” the former Justice Department lawyer says.

In years of writing on this subject, I have never heard so many officers—active and retired—willing to talk openly about the need for professional military officers to review their sacred obligations to refuse to follow unlawful orders and to think through their roles and duties given the Donald Trump wild card, even though he is still president.

“You’ve got to recognize an illegal order when it comes your way,” says another retired flag officer, saying he has been involved in unprecedented internal discussions going on right now about this subject. The officer, who declined to speak on the record, says that though lawful and unlawful orders are a part of officer training from the beginning, “the principles of loyalty to the Constitution hammered home from the start of every career... we’ve never had the real thing, never someone who occupied the White House who conducted themselves anything like President Trump.” ■

UNPRECEDENTED

has **EMERGENCY** powers,
might convince him...he...is above the law.”





THE YEAR IN MI



DAZ2D/GETTY; ICONS BY LEREMY GAN/GETTY

SINFORMATION

by GABBY DEUTCH

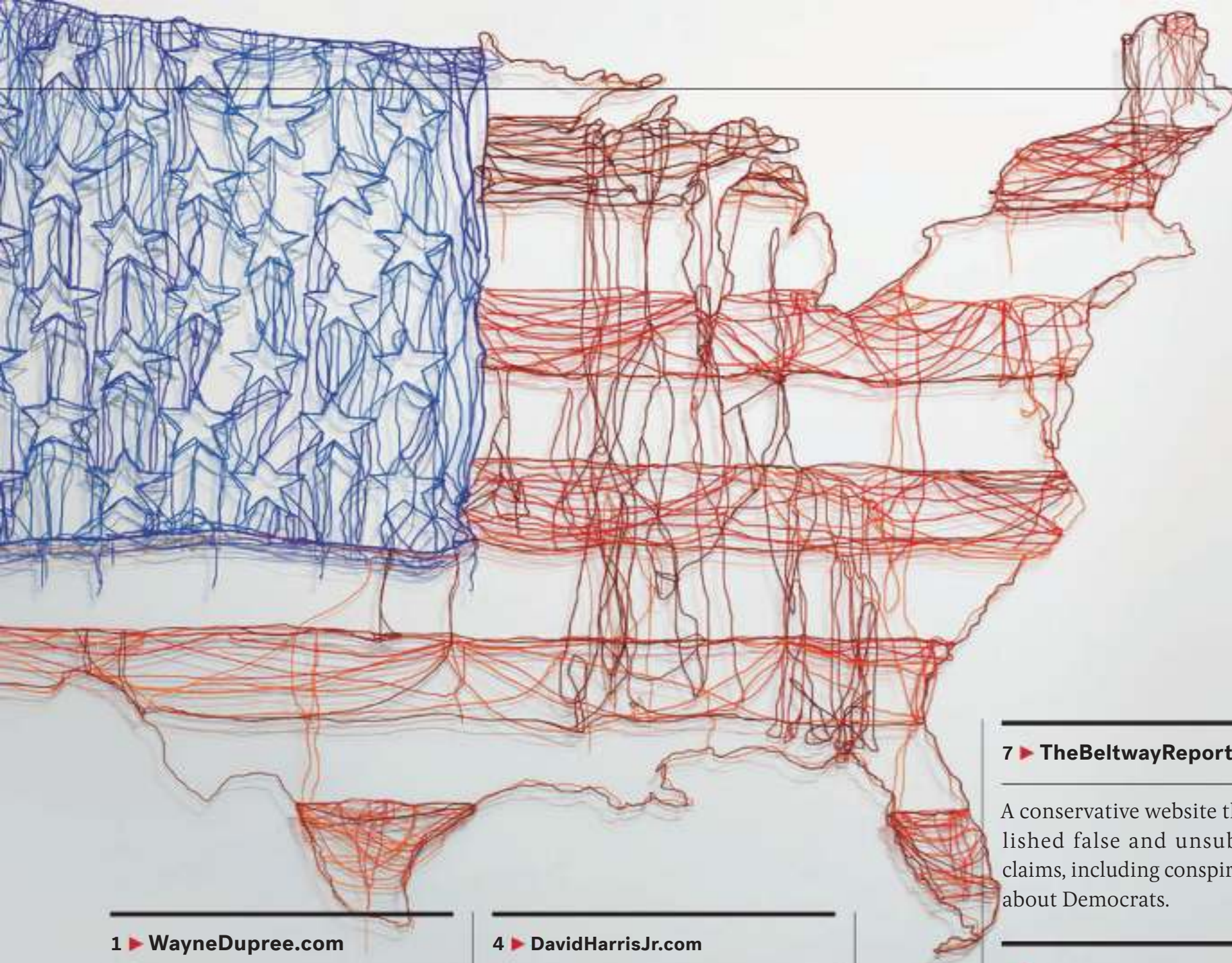


FACTS DID NOT ALWAYS FLOURISH IN 2020.

The year began with misinformation about the impeachment of President Trump from one side of the aisle—and a flurry of Democrat-funded websites posing as local news sites from the other. Soon, the internet and social media feeds were rife with myths about the origins of COVID-19, false proposed cures and misinformation about a vaccine. More recently, falsehoods about the 2020 election and the vote-counting process proliferated. ¶ With 2020 drawing to a close, NewsGuard has compiled Top 10 lists highlighting some of the most influential U.S.-based peddlers of online misinformation identified by NewsGuard’s analysts. ¶ Take, for example, TruePundit.com, a site that has been publishing misinformation about the COVID-19 vaccine since April. According to data compiled by NewsGuard, TruePundit.com was one of the most-shared misinformation sites in 2020. ¶ True Pundit received a score of 0 in NewsGuard’s Nutrition Label, meaning it passes none of NewsGuard’s nine credibility and transparency criteria. Nevertheless, the site garnered more than 5 million “engagements” (or likes, shares and comments on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn) in 2020, according to NewsWhip, a social media analytics company. That is roughly the same amount of engagement earned by STAT News, a respected health and science news website that has been a leader in covering the pandemic and earned a perfect 100 score from NewsGuard. ¶ NewsGuard’s year-end lists also spotlight U.S.-based publications, big and small, that are practicing responsible journalism in a transparent manner. ¶ To produce these lists, NewsGuard relied on our credibility ratings of nearly 5,000 news and information sites in the U.S., and engagement data NewsGuard obtained from NewsWhip.

The Top Ten Misinformers

➔ NewsGuard awards websites a score of 0 to 100, depending on how many of NewsGuard’s nine credibility and transparency criteria the site meets. A site scoring below a 60 earns a Red, or generally unreliable, rating. In this list, we have identified the least credible sites—meaning those that score below a 10—that garnered the most social media engagement in 2020, starting with the most widely shared site at number one. These websites have a record of routinely publishing falsehoods and, in most cases, refusing to disclose to readers who owns the site or who creates its content. Eight of these sites have published misinformation about the coronavirus or about the U.S. election. Again, these are the misinformation sites with the most engagement. Although NewsGuard has also rated liberal-leaning sites Red (such as the Courier Newsroom chain of pseudo-local news sites that are funded by a Democratic-allied nonprofit), you’ll see that many of the sites below lean sharply to the right, suggesting that conservative misinformers are better at attracting and engaging an audience.



1 ► **WayneDupree.com**

The website of conservative radio host Wayne Dupree, which has repeatedly published false and misleading claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 ► **GellerReport.com**

A blog run by activist Pamela Geller that portrays Islam and its adherents in a negative light. The site has published false claims about former President Barack Obama, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 U.S. election.

3 ► **RedStateWatcher.com**

An anonymously operated conservative website that republishes false and misleading stories, usually about U.S. politics. The site has also published false claims about the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 ► **DavidHarrisJr.com**

A conservative site run by health and media entrepreneur David Harris Jr. that has published false and misleading stories about the 2020 election.

5 ► **TruePundit.com**

A website that has frequently promoted conspiracy theories and false information, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.

6 ► **Healthy-Holistic-Living.com**

A website that says it “supports people with a passion for holistic living” that has promoted unsubstantiated cancer cures and deleted false content without publishing corrections.

7 ► **TheBeltwayReport.com**

A conservative website that has published false and unsubstantiated claims, including conspiracy theories about Democrats.

8 ► **ZeroHedge.com**

A political and financial blog that frequently publishes false information, including about COVID-19 and the 2020 election, and news stories sympathetic to Russia’s government.

9 ► **UniteAmericaFirst.com**

A conservative website run by Will Johnson, a Republican activist and YouTuber, that has published false and misleading information, including about the 2020 election.

10 ► **UncleSamsMisguidedChildren.com**

A news site covering U.S. politics, the military and law enforcement that has advanced false claims about COVID-19 and the 2020 election and is tied to the Oath Keepers, a far-right militia organization.

GETTY



The Top Ten Repeat Offenders

» We have identified 85 websites that published falsehoods about both COVID-19 and the 2020 U.S. election. Of the sites that published falsehoods about both topics, these 10 received the most social media engagement in 2020. They are listed by engagement, with the most widely shared at number one.

1 ► **Breitbart.com**

A news and commentary site that has advocated for President Donald Trump's nationalist and populist policies and does not disclose this agenda.

2 ► **TheBlaze.com**

The website of The Blaze, a conservative media network founded by commentator Glenn Beck.

3 ► **TheEpochTimes.com**

The website of *The Epoch Times*, a conservative newspaper founded by members of a spiritual group persecuted in China.

4 ► **LawEnforcementToday.com**

A website providing news and information for law enforcement professionals.

5 ► **TrendingPolitics.com**

An anonymously operated news site connected to a network of Facebook pages with millions of followers.

6 ► **WND.com**

A website originally known as WorldNetDaily that has advanced conspiracy theories about former President Barack Obama's birth certificate and DNC staffer Seth Rich.

7 ► **LifeSiteNews.com**

A website that publishes news and opinion on anti-abortion activism and legislation.

8 ► **TheGatewayPundit.com**

A news site run by blogger Jim Hoft that has promoted conspiracy theories on topics including the 2018 Parkland, Florida, school shooting.

9 ► **RedState.com**

A right-leaning news site that identifies most writers and editors only with pseudonyms.

10 ► **RushLimbaugh.com**

The website for *The Rush Limbaugh Show*, the syndicated radio program hosted by the conservative political commentator.





GETTY

Photograph by SHANA NOVAK

» NewsGuard also highlighted 10 sites that produce content that is **truthful, compelling, credible and transparent**. However, due to their relatively small staffs or the niche topics they cover, they typically receive little social media engagement. They are:

1 ► TheRepublic.com

The website of *The Republic*, a daily newspaper covering Columbus, Indiana, in the southern portion of the state.

2 ► Whig.com

The website for *The Herald-Whig*, a newspaper based in Quincy, Illinois, that covers the city of Quincy and surrounding communities in the west central portion of the state.

3 ► OklahomaWatch.org

The website for OklahomaWatch.org, a nonprofit news organization that publishes in-depth, data-based coverage of Oklahoma politics and social issues.

4 ► TheIncline.com

A website covering news, politics, arts and culture in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

5 ► HealthFeedback.org

A fact-checking site that evaluates the credibility of health and medical claims made by news organizations or circulating on social media.

6 ► RetractionWatch.com

Blog and database dedicated to chronicling retractions of articles from scientific journals. The site states that its mission is “tracking retractions as a window into the scientific process.”

7 ► Triad-City-Beat.com

The website of *Triad City Beat*, an alternative weekly newspaper that covers news and culture in the North Carolina Triad cities of Winston-Salem, High Point and Greensboro.

8 ► MyRecordJournal.com

The website for the *Record-Journal*, a daily newspaper based in Meriden, Connecticut.

9 ► CrainsCleveland.com

The website of *Crain's Cleveland Business*, a weekly magazine that covers finance and industry for the city and northeastern Ohio.

10 ► WCTrib.com

The website of the *West Central Tribune*, a daily newspaper serving Willmar, Minnesota, and surrounding parts of western and central Minnesota.

And among the 15 percent of U.S.-based sites that earned a perfect score from NewsGuard, these 10 received the most social media engagement in 2020. They are:

1 NBCNews.com

2 NYTimes.com

3 MSN.com

4 WashingtonPost.com

5 NPR.org

6 BusinessInsider.com

7 USAToday.com

8 Newsweek.com

9 Politico.com

10 TheAtlantic.com

DISCLOSURE: Newsweek, MSN and Business Insider have business relationships with NewsGuard or its founders. Full details can be found on each site's Nutrition Label.

UNCHARTED

Secrets to Happiness Around the World

WITH THE TOLL 2020 TOOK ON ALL OF US, THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS SEEMED MORE challenging than ever, but we learned that everyone can relate to isolation and dark days. How each of us finds happiness is another story though, suggests *The Atlas of Happiness: The Global Secrets of How to Be Happy*, in which Helen Russell shares 30 countries' take on contentment. Our list below highlights some of our favorite cultural concepts from the book, as well as some additions. From channeling your inner grit—or *sisu*—to surviving extended darkness like in Finland, or embracing fleeting, imperfect moments of life suggested by the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*, here are the secrets to well-being and joy around the world. —Kathleen Rellihan

GETTY; TOP RIGHT: DISNEY/LUCASFILM



MAY THE MELODY BE WITH YOU
Composer Ludwig Göransson on scoring
Disney's *The Mandalorian*. » P.44

**FRILUFTSLIV
NORWAY**

Friluftsliv technically means “free air life,” but its connotation extends to recognize the power of the outdoors to uplift. Norwegians place a lot of value on spending time in nature for spiritual and physical well-being, which may explain why the country ranks so high on the world’s happiest places. (See #3 on following spread)



01 Saudade — Brazil

A feeling of melancholy, longing and nostalgia for a happiness that once was or will never happen again, *saudade* is recognized in the literature and music of Brazil, Portugal and Cape Verde. Portuguese writer Manuel de Melo describes the concept as “a pleasure you suffer, an ailment you enjoy.”

02 Niksen — Netherlands

Embrace the Dutch concept of *niksen*—or the art of doing nothing—to dissipate anxiety, allow creativity to bubble to the surface and to boost your productivity. Allow your mind to wander wherever it likes, hopefully arriving at contentment.



03 Friluftsliv — Norway (See previous spread)

04 Sisu — Finland

The Finns uniquely thrive in the long, dark Arctic winter by channeling their inner grit, or *sisu*, which manifests by embracing their extreme weather—from cycling in snow or even ice swimming. Perhaps soaking in saunas—the national pastime of the “happiest country in the world” three years in a row according to the U.N.—also has something to do with their inner glow.



05 Meraki — Greece

The ingredient in all Greek dishes that fill you with joy? *Meraki*, or simply the labor of love, is the concept that giving your undivided attention to a task, especially a creative or artistic one—like cooking, for example—will bring you and others happiness. So forget multitasking and put some soul into it.





06 Ubuntu

— South Africa

From a word used by the Bantu people across Africa, this humanitarian objective has been claimed by the South African people. During the memorial service for Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama said *ubuntu* described his greatest gift, “that there is a oneness to humanity; that we achieve ourselves by caring for those around us.”



07 Keyif

— Turkey

Taking time every day to savor the simple moments in life is appreciated by Turks. From enjoying meze with friends or strolling along the Bosphorus, *keyif*—the pursuit of a moment of idle pleasure—is happiness made easy.



08 Azart

— Russia

Taking uncomfortable, almost extreme chances is the meaning behind the Russian concept of *azart*. It invites Russians’ zeal for taking life by the horns and surviving anything that comes their way. One time-honored *azart* practice? Enjoy a hardy birch-twig beating in the sauna at the nearest *banya*, or bathhouse.

09 Wabi-sabi

— Japan

Imperfection, impermanence and incompleteness is the meaning behind the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*. In this traditionally Buddhist country, accepting the transience of life and embracing things in their most natural state leads to contentment. This could be appreciating the beauty in chipped pottery, an aging face or fleeting cherry blossoms.



FILM MUSIC

Connecting Stories and Sounds

The *Mandalorian* composer Ludwig Göransson on pandemic recording and the pressure to please *Star Wars* fans

FOR SOMEONE WHO'S MADE SOME of the hardest-hitting music of recent years, Ludwig Göransson exhibits a decidedly laid-back demeanor. From the light beard, easy smile and frequently sandaled feet to his soft-spoken yet friendly style of conversation, the 36-year-old can easily cause one to forget he's already won Grammys, an Oscar, and an Emmy in his relatively short career.

Chalk that up to the comfortable confidence that comes from the seeming ease with which he's composed complex scores for huge Hollywood projects, most recently for Christopher Nolan's *Tenet* and the *Star Wars* spin-off *The Mandalorian*, or attribute it to a creative, European upbringing by a florist mother and a guitar-teacher father in Linköping, Sweden. Speaking to *Newsweek* recently by phone, Göransson said it was a house filled with an eclectic mix of music that helped shape him as an artist.

"My sister was playing violin in the orchestra," he said. At first he was bored at the frequent performances the family attended, until, "My dad was whispering stories in my ear, about what was going on—like stories—and I remember that made the whole thing a lot more fun."

Now Göransson is the one setting music to stories, be it with director Ryan Coogler for *Fruitvale Station*, *Black Panther*, *Creed* and *Creed II*, or his production work for Childish Gambino, the hip-hop persona of actor Donald Glover. His work with the latter led him to winning Grammys for Record of the Year and Song of the Year for 2018's "This Is America." The professional accolades kept coming with another Grammy, an Oscar and a Golden Globe for *Black Panther*, and then just this September, he won an Emmy for scoring Disney+'s *The Mandalorian*. *Tenet*'s score, which shifts effortlessly between antsy, industrial key-

board to surreally calming melodies, could be yet another awards contender for Göransson.

Around the same time his father helped make the connection between stories and sound, young Göransson began picking up on musical scores. He said *The X-Files* was likely the first TV show where he noticed the effect the music had on him. He said, "I was so, so scared by that show—just hearing that whistle [in the theme] gave me the creeps, and I made the association about what was giving me the shivers. I had a similar moment, but in a different emotional way, with

Edward Scissorhands [music by Danny Elfman], where I was crying. I realized that it was because of the score."

This set him on his path to scoring films and television. He first went to the Stockholm Royal College of Music before going to the University of Southern California for its Scoring for Motion Picture and Television program. It was at a party while at USC where he met his first friend in America, Ryan Coogler. While playing pool, they bonded over music, when a surprised Göransson learned the young director was a fan of Swedish



AUSTIN HARGRAVE/ID-PR



artists Lykke Li and Little Dragon.

That chance encounter proved to be life-changing, as did another meeting not long afterward. Fresh out of school, Göransson's first job was music for the cult classic TV comedy *Community*. The show fulfilled his desire to work in a wide variety of styles (sometimes with a full orchestra), but it was his friendship with cast member Donald Glover that exposed Göransson to a whole new audience. His production work with Glover (as Childish Gambino) introduced him to mainstream radio listeners and made another

“I remember that feeling of being a 10-year-old kid, hearing that music for the first time, and how the music transitioned me to a different planet—it felt like it took me to a different universe.”

NO SCREEN For the music to *The Mandalorian*, the composer wanted to get away for a while from writing on a computer.

childhood dream come true when he was able to put a band together and perform at music festivals.

After checking “gigging live musician” off his list of accomplishments, Göransson went back to producing, working with music stars Haim, Chance the Rapper and even (just this year) Lykke Li. Still, for many, he's best-known for his composing work and the innovative ways in which he uses sound for scores. He makes ample use of atmosphere as an essential element to his soundtracks, almost like a featured instrument. For Coogler's 2013 debut feature *Fruitvale Station*, Göransson recorded the noise inside an actual transit station, and he captured the sounds inside a boxing gym for *Creed*. The young Swede couldn't magically transport himself to sample the natural environment of mythical Wakanda for *Black Panther's* score, but he did travel to West Africa, where he collaborated with well-known Senegalese musicians.

“My approach is to build sounds from the ground up—nothing that has specific associations. Everything is fresh, and I want to custom create a new sound and a new palette for every project that I make so you can't relate it to anything else,” he said. The directors he's worked with have also been keen collaborators who enabled his approach to creating his soundscapes. He noted, “I've been lucky to be able to work with directors for whom music has been extremely important even before they start shooting...I love to see the script first and start writing ideas based on the script and conversations we've had. It's always easier to talk to a director

when you can play music for them rather than just talk about it.”

That process is how he wrote music for *The Mandalorian*, which features an evocative opening credits song best described as a mix between an old samurai movie theme and an Ennio Morricone spaghetti western score. He said that before he began writing for the show, he met with its creator, Jon Favreau, a few months before shooting began. While they both agreed the music must capture the soul of *Star Wars*, Göransson admitted that following in *Star Wars*’ original composer John Williams’ footsteps was intimidating. In fact, it was first hearing Williams’ “The Imperial March” from the original trilogy that led him to then see the actual movies.

“I remember that feeling of being a 10-year-old kid, hearing that music for the first time, and how the music transitioned me to a different planet—it felt like it took me to a different universe,” he said. “That was the feeling that I would try to go back to when I started writing. I was like, ‘Okay, how can I go back to that feeling.’ One thing that I wanted to do for a while was to take myself away from the computer screen—normally, I write most of the music on a computer.”

Reaching back to recapture that moment from his youth also helped relieve the pressure of living up to Williams’ legendary work. He thus created the music using a different approach—one that went all the way back to the beginning for him.

“I bought this set of recorders, the little instrument that I used to play when I was around 8-years-old. Because I wanted to be able to

play all the instruments myself, I surrounded myself with just piano, guitars, drums, bass, these recorders, and I locked myself into a studio and started recording music. Playing these instruments resonated with me. When working with a computer, you put so much time and effort into it, and you’re not getting anything back. But when I was playing these instruments, they were talking to me. One instrument told me to go to another instrument, and that was kind of the puzzle process.”

He began working on the score for the second season of *The Mandalorian* just as COVID-19 struck. Fortunately though, a momentary lull in the pandemic during the summer allowed him to gather musicians together live, although the brass and woodwinds couldn’t be in the same room with the string players, who

“I want to custom create a new sound and a new palette for every project that I make so you can’t relate it to anything else.”



A LOT OF HARDWARE Although Göransson is not yet 40, his music has already won Grammys, an Oscar and an Emmy.

stood socially distanced from one another and played wearing masks. As unusual as that sounds, he said, “one of the highlights of every week was to go in and record with musicians and get a sense of normal life again...that was such a joy.”

Creating the score for *Tenet* was much different. The musicians recorded their parts separately in their homes, and Göransson had a much shorter deadline to wrap up the music for Nolan, whose usual composer, Hans Zimmer, was committed to *Dune*. However, this method proved to complement the sci-fi thriller’s theme of time manipulation. Nolan also surprised the young composer with his enthusiasm and deep knowledge of music, and their conversations fostered what Göransson described as an easy collaboration.

Next, Göransson may find some time alone in the spotlight without any collaborators. After releasing an EP of experimental music in 2013 that in Göransson fashion spanned genres from folk to ethereal dance pop, he’s looking to finish a full album. He began it a couple of years ago, but then all those pesky award-winning projects kept turning up. He estimated he’s currently about 70 percent finished with it and says the album—along with spending time with his wife and young son—will be his focus for now. Since he’s often working with other people, he said that for the album, he has “all these ideas that need to come out, so it’s kind of like therapy.”

And what about completing the EGOT? He has an Emmy, a few Grammys and an Oscar. Will he be going to Broadway once it reopens to try his hand at taking home a Tony?

“No, no plans so far,” he said, laughing. “But I love all kinds of different mediums of music. Maybe when the time is right.” ■

*"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.



PARTING SHOT

Jared Padalecki

AS THE EYES OF A RANGER RETURN TO TELEVISION, DON'T EXPECT THE NEW *Walker* (CW, January 21) to be anything like the original *Walker, Texas Ranger*. "I'll start with what we take from the original, which is that this is a show about a guy named Walker who happens to be a Texas Ranger," says Jared Padalecki, who stars in and executive produces the reboot. "It's a really different show. I don't think it could be more different than the original." This version is more about helping "provide a voice to the voiceless." Padalecki first found success on *Gilmore Girls*, followed by a 15-year-run on *Supernatural*. "I don't know how to say it other than it's really just been a series of blessings, an embarrassment of riches." Last year's finale of *Supernatural* was interrupted by the pandemic, but when they were able to film safely, it proved an emotional experience for the 38-year-old actor. "Every time I read the finale leading up to filming, I cried." That said, in the era of reboots, he still holds out hope to return to the part. "I guess there's still that carrot on a stick I keep in the back of my head. Hopefully one day."

How does your version of *Walker* differ from the original?

This show is not really about high kicking minorities in the face like the original. It's a very, very different character and we're very aware of the times we live in right now. It's important that we represent people that aren't always represented. But this show is very much about somebody who's a family man who happens to be a Ranger, not a Ranger who happens to have a family.

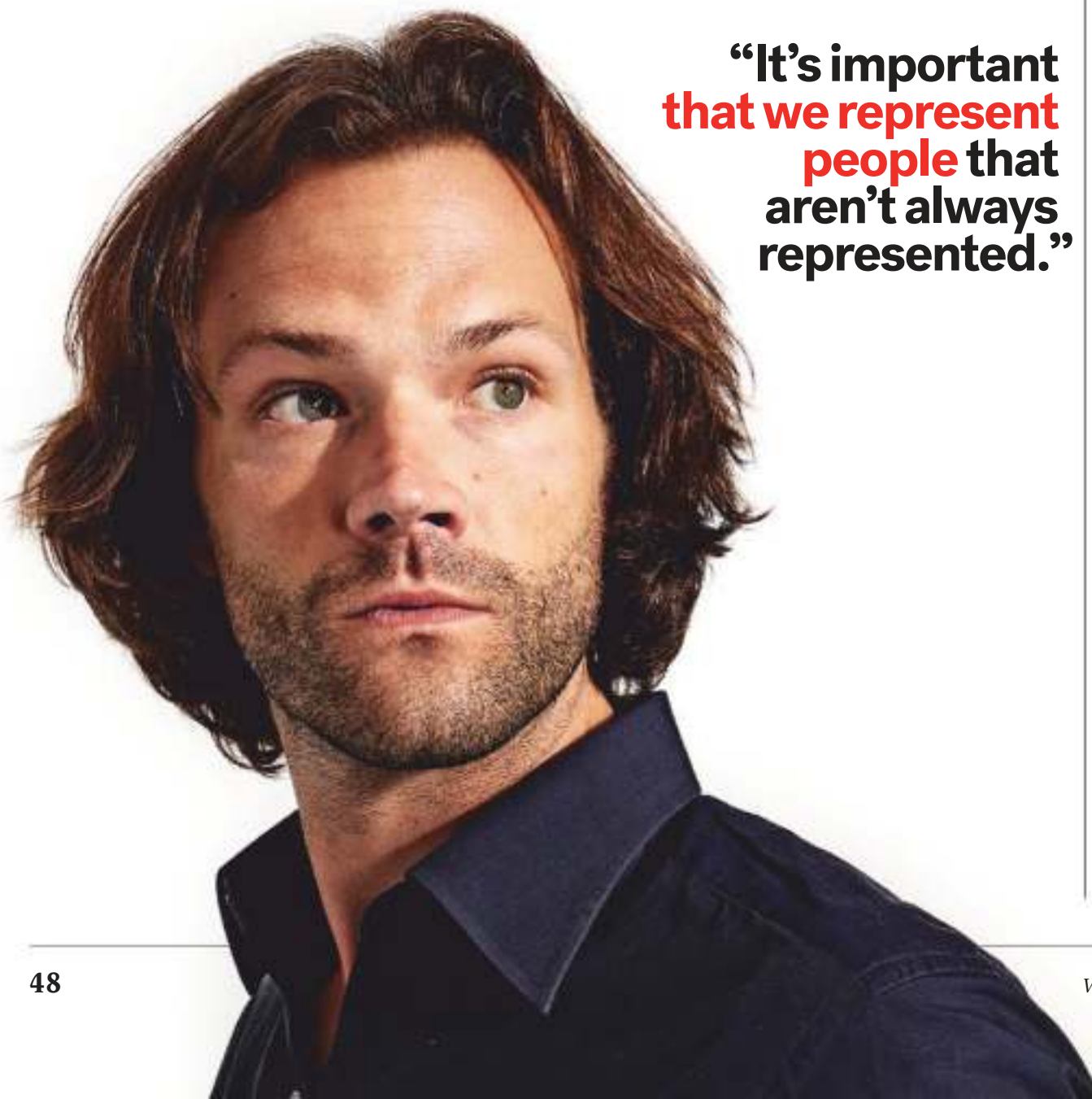
Walker was shot entirely during the pandemic. Was it difficult getting the show together during all this?

It's definitely affected the prep of the show. All our meetings are done via Zoom and even our morale on set, which is so important to me, is just difficult because when they call "cut," you can't walk over to the grips or the electrics and shoot the sh*t. You're not allowed to, and you don't want to be responsible. If I get it, then I put a couple of hundred people out of work. So I'm just trying to be responsible.

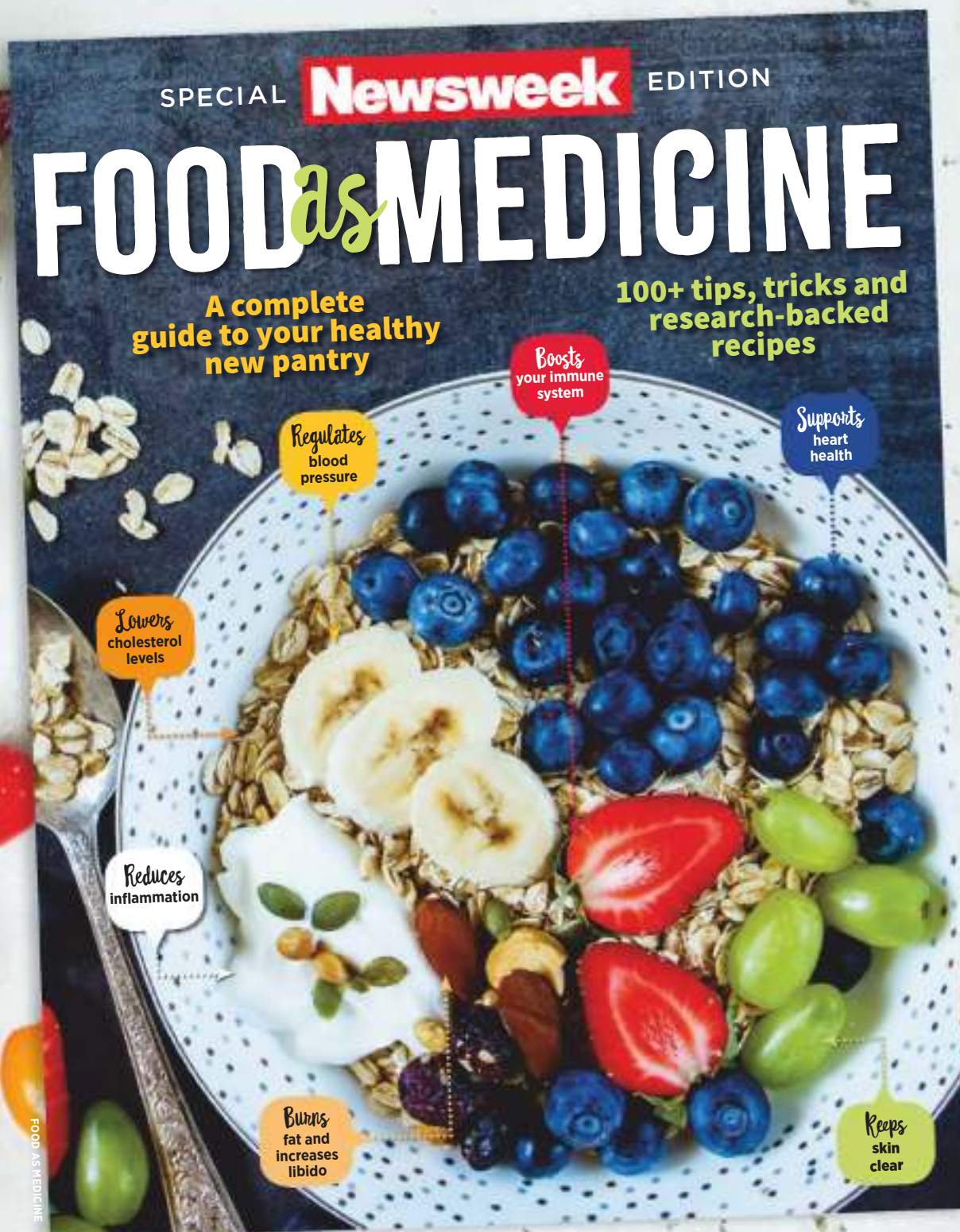
Supernatural ran for 15 years. How do you feel about playing Sam Winchester for the last time?

Part of me hasn't dealt with it. During the quarantine hiatus from filming, I was able to kind of wrap my head around it and say goodbye to Sam. But part of me is always going to hope and pray that we get a chance to go sit in the Impala again. I mean, I died several times on *Supernatural* and came back [laughs]. —H. Alan Scott

"It's important that we represent people that aren't always represented."



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