

Nonfiction: A Meditation on Our Relationship to the Landscapes We Inhabit

By Michael Kimmelman, *NY Times*, April 18, 2019

Review of *The Absent Hand: Reimagining Our American Landscape*, By Suzannah Lessard

Not long ago, I called the National Park Service in Richmond, Va., wanting advice about visiting Civil War sites with the family. “What kind of site do you want to visit?” asked the cheerful park ranger. I rambled on about our having once wandered the battlefield at Fredericksburg, in the flush of a sunny summer morning, feeling that its pretty fields, hills and gullies had told the story of the carnage that transpired there quite movingly. “Uh-huh,” the ranger replied. Clearly, I hadn’t answered his question. “Are you looking for a certain historical perspective?” he said. The penny dropped. Richmond has battlefields where the South prevailed and battlefields where the North did. Were we looking for one or the other? I pretended not to understand, turning the conversation toward where to go for the best walk in the countryside, and sensed the ranger’s relief.

This seems to be where we are now, barricaded in different fortresses of selective memory. Civil War sites lend themselves especially well to such tribal instincts. But our shifting national identity is inscribed everywhere from sea to shining sea. Every place carries meanings that accumulate like sediments over time. “Is not landscape itself — whether purposely preserved or merely lasting beyond its time — also, ultimately, most precious to us not as an elegiac reminder of the past but as a mirror of ourselves, then and now, in all our complicated humanity?” Suzannah Lessard asks in “The Absent Hand.” Half memoir, half *cri de coeur*, Lessard’s lambent, thoughtful, exquisitely written collection of interconnected essays dissects — as an art historian would a picture, a literary critic a text, a medical examiner a cadaver — a diverse swath of America, from Gettysburg and the King of Prussia Mall in Pennsylvania to Truth or Consequences, N.M.; from the seat of an airplane, 30,000-odd feet above Alaska, to the stoops and sidewalks of Brooklyn during the 1990s; from Georgetown, in Washington, where the author used to live, to Youngstown, Ohio, where “no matter how hard I tried,” Lessard says, “I could not identify with this misfortune, this extreme vulnerability of an entire urban society.”

A longtime staff writer for *The New Yorker*, author of “The Architect of Desire,” one of the first editors of *The Washington Monthly* and self-described suburbophobe, Lessard devotes much of the book to exploring what she terms America’s “atopia,” our vast, seemingly unplanned, inchoate, exurban sprawl, which remains to her largely inscrutable and tragic. She writes about such places from what you might call an exalted literary remove. The mode is epistolary, poetic, occasionally honest to a fault (the Youngstown remark, for example) and moral.

“Because we have so far failed as effective stewards, yet are as dependent as ever, nature also represents our ungovernedness: our inability in this very basic matter of self-preservation to take care of ourselves,” she writes. At the same time, Lessard notes how “the healthier the ecology of a region, the more people and businesses it attracts,” which “in turn, puts ever more pressure on the environment, escalating the challenge of protecting it” and at the same time exacerbating class conflicts, a problem to which she admits contributing as a second-home owner in New York’s Hudson Valley.

These class conflicts, indicative of “the national blue-red divide,” can “make local politics almost violent,” she writes. “The farmer who hopes to make some money off his land by developing it, working-class families who have seen employment shrink to nearly nothing but have been offered a meaningful sum by a fracking company — such people see landscape preservationists, like environmentalists, as the enemy.” [...]

[A]s Lessard points out, landscape preservation in the United States emerged during the 1890s as a movement to save Civil War battlefields, although, so as not to upset Confederate sympathizers, for years the Park Service avoided discussions of slavery in its ranger talks, on-site plaques and other curatorial materials. Blood-drenched graveyards of industrialized killing morphed into cherished emblems of American nobility and pastoral innocence through what was in effect a policy of willful amnesia, a kind of second act of repression. Like a blanket of fresh snow, this new identity whitewashed the old.

Cut the Science Budget? Not So Fast

By Dennis Overbye, March 11, 2019, *NY Times*

The president proposes and Congress disposes. So goes the standard description of the constitutional process by which our republic is governed. Judging from the news headlines, you might think this process has not been friendly lately to the scientific community. Again and again, the Trump administration has proposed drastic cuts to the research budgets of the Department of Energy, the National Science Foundation, NASA and other agencies.

5 Quietly, however, Congress often has gone the other way and handed out increases. In February, the Congress passed, and President Trump finally signed, a spending bill for 2019, averting another government shutdown. Lost amid the collective sigh of relief and the hoopla about President Trump's wall was the news that astronomers had won a key victory: A pair of cosmically ambitious telescopes were rescued from possible oblivion. One of them, the James Webb Space Telescope, NASA's long-promised successor to the Hubble Space Telescope, was designed to peer deeper into space and time than any optical eyes before it, to study the earliest stars and galaxies of the cosmos. But as of last year, it was deep in the red. [...]

A similar theme runs through the last couple of years. "Over the past two budget cycles, Congress has indeed rejected the Trump administration's proposed topline budget cuts to federal agencies that fund science," said Mitch Ambrose of the American Institute of Physics, which tracks federal spending on research.

15 Consider the final 2019 budget: Mr. Trump proposed a 5 percent cut in NASA's space science, but Congress made it an 11 percent increase, to \$6.9 billion. The president wanted to cut the National Science Foundation budget by 4 percent, but Congress raised it by the same amount, to \$8.1 billion. The Geological Survey saw an even more sizable transformation. The administration proposed cutting its budget by \$250 million, or about 21 percent. That would have slashed support for Climate Science Centers, which study the regional effects of climate change, and for research on carbon sequestration. Congress rejected those cuts, allotting the climate centers \$25 million, only a shade less than in recent years. The Geological Survey as a whole received a one percent raise, to \$1.2 billion. Even the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with its politically sensitive mission to study climate and weather, received a 3 percent increase, worth \$16 million, to its \$566 million budget for science for 2019. The Trump administration had proposed a 41 percent cut — a potentially devastating blow to the agency. By comparison, the president's border wall would cost about \$5.7 billion.

20 "Though this administration has regrettably chosen to ignore the findings of its own scientists in regards to climate change, we as lawmakers have a responsibility to protect the public's interest," Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson, a Democrat from Texas, said in a recent meeting of the House Science Committee, which she now heads. Lamar Alexander, the Republican chairman of the Senate's Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies, expressed the same sentiment last spring in a statement to his committee. "Over the last three years, Congress has developed quite a consensus on science and research," he said, noting in particular its agreement on medical research and supercomputing. "I would tell President Trump and the Office of Management and Budget that science, research and innovation is what made America first, and I recommend that he add science research and innovation to his 'America First' agenda."

35 Not all is rosy in the realms of science policy. Since 1997, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been discouraged from studying guns and violence by the so-called Dickey Amendment, which prohibits the C.D.C. from promoting gun control. Last year Congress affirmed that the C.D.C. could study the causes of gun violence, but provided no money for such research. In an email, Julie Eschelbach, spokeswoman for the agency said, "Although C.D.C. does not receive direct funding for firearm-related research, C.D.C. has and continues to support data collection activities and analyses to document the public health burden of firearm injuries in the U.S." And 86 percent of Americans, a majority of both Democrats and Republicans, favor spending more money on science, according to a recent poll by Hart Research and Echelon Insights. Once upon a time — in Einstein's day, for example — it might have been considered unseemly for scientists to step outside their laboratories and make their case to the public. Today, organizations such as the American Astronomical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science have programs that teach young scientists how to do just that. That work is unlikely ever to be finished. Mr. Trump on Monday began unveiling his 2020 budget, and the cycle of cuts, cancellation and rescue may repeat itself again. Indeed, his new budget proposes to cancel Wfirst as well as a pair of missions devoted to studying Earth's climate, atmosphere and oceans. "Scientists are going to have to work hard to make new friends in Congress," wrote Matt Mountain, former director of the Space Telescope Science Institute, which runs the Hubble and will run the Webb telescope, and president of the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, in an email. More practice in the art of the possible, Dr. Mountain said, "more stuff they never taught us at graduate school."

It Wasn't 'Verbal Blackface.' AOC Was Code-Switching.

John McWhorter, *The Atlantic*, Apr 9, 2019

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been accused of a lot, but the latest charge is especially piquant. Apparently, the new representative of some of the most multiethnic neighborhoods in the United States has engaged in “verbal blackface.” The supposed offense occurred when she spoke to the Reverend Al Sharpton’s National Action Network last week and sprinkled some elements of Black English into her speech. “I’m proud to be a bartender. Ain’t nothing wrong with that,” she said, also stretching “wrong” out a bit and intoning in a way sometimes referred to as a “drawl,” but which is also part of the Black English tool kit. John Cardillo of Newsmax tweeted, “In case you’re wondering, this is what blackface sounds like,” while Ryan Saavedra of The Daily Wire charged that Ocasio-Cortez, in this speech, “speaks in an accent that she never uses.” Lawrence Jones, a Fox News contributor and black American, shared a Twitter hashtag, #WedontTalkLikeThat.

The criticism of these sentences uttered by someone trying to connect with a black audience is evidence of an ignorance about the nature and use of one of the most interesting developments in America’s linguistic history—an endlessly fascinating dialect too often treated as a collection of mistakes, an albatross condemning unlucky people to failure, or some kind of performance. At a time when increasing numbers of serious public figures are going to be using Black English as an element in their oratorical palette, it’s high time we wised up on the likes of “Ain’t nothing wrong with that.”

Ocasio-Cortez was engaging in what linguists call code-switching. Few find code-switching surprising when Latinos do it between English and Spanish, alternating between the two languages within a single conversation or even sentence. The concept perhaps seems less familiar when done between dialects of the same language, but this, too, is extremely common. For example, what an unfortunate number of Americans think of as black people slipping into “errors” when they speak is, in the scientific sense, people code-switching between standard and Black English, the latter of which is an alternative, and not degraded, form of English.

Ocasio-Cortez’s critics seem to assume that since she is not black, her use of Black English must be some kind of act. This, however, is based on a major misreading of the linguistic reality of Latinos in America’s big cities. Since the 1950s, long-term and intense contact between black and Latino people in urban neighborhoods has created a large overlap between Black English and, for example, “Nuyorican” English, the dialect of New York’s Puerto Rican community. To a considerable extent, Latinos now speak “Ebonics” just as black people do, using the same slang and constructions, code-switching between it and standard English (and Spanish!) in the same ways. This means that Ocasio-Cortez, as a Latina, was not using a dialect foreign to her experience. She grew up around it; it would be surprising if she did not have it in her repertoire to some extent. “I am from the Bronx. I act & talk like it,” she tweeted. Anyone who would riposte that she isn’t from the black Bronx in particular would miss that Black English stopped being a black-exclusive dialect in the Bronx decades ago.

The dustup also reflects another misimpression about Black English: that only uneducated people can be considered “authentic” in using it. This partly reflects a sense that Black English is a mere matter of grammatical flubs, a legacy of inadequate education. That analysis of Black English has been resoundingly refuted by shelves and shelves of research by linguists. Yet even someone who acknowledges that Black English is not broken language might suppose that it is rooted solely in being black and, roughly, poor. President Barack Obama, for example, came in for much criticism—some from black people—for using some Black English when speaking to black audiences. His critics assumed that, because he was an educated person, Obama’s Black English could not possibly be “authentic” and was therefore condescending. [...]

So: “How dare [Ocasio-Cortez] use Black English to try to connect with black people!” someone harrumphs. But her doing so only qualifies as condescending if Black English is broken—but it isn’t—or if Ocasio-Cortez didn’t grow up with it in her linguistic repertoire and environment, which she did. Notably, the audience at the National Action Network didn’t mind her Ebonic notes—“Go on, girl, go on,” one man said. The potshots at Ocasio-Cortez make sense only if we parse the black people at that event as too dim to understand that they were being spoken down to. There is no need to parse them that way.

Public language in America is becoming less formal practically by the week, and Black English is increasingly a lingua franca among American youth. In our era, as politicians are minted whose only memories of the 20th century were formed as small children, we will hear ever more use of Black English in public, with its warm, demotic flavor. It would be too easy to end this piece with “Ain’t nothing wrong with that,” and so I won’t—except, actually, I suppose I just did.

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Trigger Warning: an embarrassing fragility on college campuses, George F. Will, Washington Post, 12 September 2018

4 The beginning of another academic year brings the certainty of campus episodes illustrating what Daniel Patrick Moynihan, distinguished professor and venerated politician, called “the leakage of reality from American life.” Colleges and universities are increasingly susceptible to intellectual fads and political hysteria, partly because the institutions employ so many people whose talents, such as they are, are extraneous to the
5 institutions’ core mission: scholarship. Writing in April in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Lyell Asher, professor of English at Lewis & Clark College, noted that “the kudzu-like growth of the administrative bureaucracy in higher education” is partly a response to two principles widely accepted on campuses: Anything that can be construed as bigotry and hatred should be so construed, and anything construed as such should be considered evidence of an epidemic. Often, Asher noted, a majority of the academic bureaucrats
10 directly involved with students, from dorms to “bias-response teams” to freshman “orientation” (which often means political indoctrination), have graduate degrees not in academic disciplines but from education schools with “two mutually reinforcing characteristics”: ideological orthodoxy and low academic standards for degrees in vaporous subjects such as “educational leadership” or “higher-education management.”

The problem is not anti-intellectualism but the “un-intellectualism” of a growing cohort of persons who,
15 lacking talents for or training in scholarship, find vocations in micromanaging student behavior to combat imagined threats to “social justice.” Can *anyone* on a campus say *anything* sensible about how the adjective modifies the noun? Never mind. As Asher said, groupthink and political intimidation inevitably result from this ever-thickening layer of people with status anxieties because they are parasitic off institutions with scholarly purposes. The Manhattan Institute’s Heather Mac Donald says that between the 1997-1998 academic
20 year and the Great Recession year of 2008-2009, while the University of California student population grew 33 percent and tenure-track faculty grew 25 percent, senior administrators grew 125 percent. “The ratio of senior managers to professors climbed from 1 to 2.1 to near-parity of 1 to 1.1,” she wrote.

In her just-published book “*The Diversity Delusion: How Race and Gender Pandering Corrupt the University and Undermine Our Culture*,” Mac Donald writes that many students have become what tort law practitioners
25 call “eggshell plaintiffs,” people who make a cult of fragility — being “triggered” (i.e., traumatized) by this or that idea or speech. Asher correctly noted that the language of triggering “converts students into objects for the sake of rendering their reactions ‘objective,’ and by extension valid: A student’s triggered response is no more to be questioned than an apple’s falling downward or a spark’s flying upward.” So the number of things not to be questioned on campuses multiplies. Students encouraged to feel fragile will learn to recoil from
30 “microaggressions” so micro that few can discern them. A University of California guide to microaggressions gave these examples of insensitive speech: “I believe the most qualified person should get the job” and “Everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough.” Fragile students are encouraged in “narcissistic victimhood” by administrators whose vocation is to tend to the injured. These administrators are, Mac Donald argues, “determined to preserve in many of their students the thin skin and solipsism of
35 adolescence.”

Nowadays, radical intellectuals who are eager to be “transgressive” have difficulty finding remaining social rules and boundaries to transgress: When all icons have been smashed, the iconoclast’s lot is not a happy one. Similarly, academic administrators whose mission is the elimination of racism have difficulty finding any in colleges and universities whose student admissions and faculty hiring practices are shaped by the relentless
40 pursuit of diversity. Explicit racism having been substantially reduced in American society, a multibillion-dollar industry for consultants (and corporate diversity officers, academic deans, etc.: UCLA’s vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion earns more than \$400,000) has developed around testing to detect “implicit bias.” It is assumed to be ubiquitous until proved otherwise, so detecting it is steady work: Undetectable without arcane tests and expensive experts, you never know when it has been expunged, and government supervision of *everything* must be minute and unending. And always there is a trickle of peculiar language. The associate vice chancellor and dean of students at the University of California at Berkeley — where the Division of Equity and Inclusion has a staff of 150 — urges students to “listen with integrity.” If you do not understand the peculiar patois spoken by the academy’s administrators, try listening with more integrity.

Labour says it has looked into 673 cases of alleged antisemitism : Members have been suspended or formally investigated in 307 cases, party discloses, Jessica Elgot, 11 February 2019, *The Guardian*

- 4 Angry MPs have demanded further action against antisemitism after Labour revealed it has investigated 673 alleged cases and expelled 12 party members since last April. The party revealed the figures in an email to MPs, and suggested no earlier figures could be compiled because there was “no consistent and comprehensive system for recording and processing cases of antisemitism”. However, the party’s former general secretary
- 5 Iain McNicol disputed that claim in a private meeting with Labour MPs on Monday night, saying such a system had been in place. MPs who met for the weekly parliamentary Labour party meeting suggested they would demand that the Labour leadership return to answer questions about the criteria for judging cases.

Margaret Hodge was among the MPs who questioned the statistics after the meeting, saying she alone had submitted more than 200 examples of “vile antisemitism” where she believed the evidence showed they had

10 connections with Labour. “There has been a breakdown in trust,” the veteran MP said. Releasing the disciplinary data for the first time, the party’s general secretary, Jennie Formby, said 96 members had been suspended and 211 had been issued with a notice of investigation. Another 146 had been given a preliminary warning and 220 cases did not have sufficient evidence to proceed.

MPs will demand at next week’s meeting that the party spell out why many members were deemed to deserve

15 only a preliminary warning, and the criteria by which they were judged. The Labour MP Catherine McKinnell, who submitted a motion last week calling for more transparency on antisemitism cases, said she hoped for more clarity on how officials had decided which cases should receive a “reminder of conduct”, which leads to no further action.

“It begs the question: what criteria is being used if that is how an investigation is resolved? There are still a

20 lot of questions that need to be answered,” she said. The data suggests that among the 307 cases where members were investigated or suspended, decisions have been made by Labour’s governing national executive committee (NEC) in around a third of them, and more than 40 members left the party of their own volition. Forty-two members have been referred to Labour’s highest disciplinary body, the national constitutional committee (NCC), the only panel with the power to expel members.

25 Nineteen cases are currently outstanding from that committee. So far, the NCC has expelled 12 members and six have received other sanctions. Five have left the party of their own accord. Formby said the party had previously been of the view that disciplinary statistics should remain confidential because of how they could be “misinterpreted or misused for other purposes by the party’s political rivals”. However, she said that because of the “importance of rebuilding trust with Jewish communities” she had pushed NEC officers to

30 agree to the release of the data. The data also indicates a large number of complaints – more than 400 in total – about non-Labour members. A Labour party spokesperson said: “These figures relate to about 0.1% of our membership, but one antisemite in our party is one too many. We are committed to tackling antisemitism and rooting it out of our party once and for all.”

Formby said she rejected claims from some quarters that antisemitism allegations were a smear. “I have seen

35 hard evidence of it and that is why I have been so determined to do whatever is possible to eliminate it from the party,” she said. “It is also the reason why I made it a priority to implement robust procedures to deal with it whenever it is identified.” MPs leaving the meeting on Monday night said they felt deflated. “The bigger issue in all this is a lack of solidarity for Jewish MPs and an expectation of needing to prove everything with the party, rather than support for victims of racism,” one said.

40 Formby said she had attempted to reopen conversations with Jewish community organisations to rebuild trust over the past few weeks. It is understood she had a private meeting with the president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Marie van der Zyl. Formby suggested there were still some key disagreements upon which Jewish groups felt they could not engage. “I very much hope this will change as I remain absolutely committed to engaging and working together with Jewish community organisations at all times,” she said.

Trump Is Using the Opioid Crisis to Build His Wall : The epidemic is an integral part of the president's anti-immigration rhetoric, but it otherwise hasn't become an urgent part of his policy agenda. Vann R. Newkirk II, Jan 9, 2019, *The Atlantic*

1 Donald Trump hasn't talked about the opioid epidemic much recently. So when he used the peerless pulpit of the Oval Office to discuss it on Tuesday night, it could have been an opportunity to rally the public and to provide meaningful solutions. His words framed the urgency of the situation, which for many Americans may have been out of sight in the past few months. "Our southern border is a pipeline for vast quantities of illegal
5 drugs, including meth, heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl," he said. "Every week, 300 of our citizens are killed by heroin alone, 90 percent of which floods across from our southern border. More Americans will die from drugs this year than were killed in the entire Vietnam War." The president isn't wrong about the yearly death toll. Opioids like heroin and fentanyl killed more than 70,000 people in 2017, higher than the more than 50,000
10 Americans who died in Vietnam. If the 2018 and 2019 numbers are similar, the total number of Americans killed by opioids since 2014 will rival the number killed in World War II. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently confirmed that opioid deaths have become such a burden, they've reduced the overall American life expectancy. But Trump presented the same fix for the crisis as for every other problem in his
15 speech: the border wall that he'd gone on TV to pitch. The epidemic, in that way, was only a convenient means to an end, fuel for an argument the president has been making for years. The wall is the only proposal that Trump has genuinely fought to enact as president, but it's the one that will almost surely do the least to halt
20 the epidemic. The Trump administration has already admitted as much. A 2018 assessment from the Drug Enforcement Administration noted that most of the heroin flowing into the country comes through "legal ports of entry, followed by tractor-trailers, where the heroin is co-mingled with legal goods." Only a "small percentage" comes through areas of the border *between* ports of entry—the places a border wall could
25 theoretically cover. When it comes to fentanyl, the other major driver of the opioid epidemic, the DEA says it's not certain that Mexico is the main front, though large quantities of the drug are seized at the border. Fentanyl can be ordered through the mail from China, and it is typically much purer, and thus more potent and
30 deadly, than Mexican-sourced fentanyl.

The DEA's conclusions make sense: Opioids are a big business. Their production is industrialized and
35 sophisticated. Sending ad hoc groups over the border with fentanyl and heroin, in the no-man's-land between ports of entry, is likely not efficient enough to meet intense American demand. No wall could help stop the flow, in other words, no matter how well it's funded and no matter what it's made with. The White House knows that. Yet, as on Tuesday, the occasions when Trump has mentioned the opioid crisis have usually been
40 connected to the wall. In a major anti-opioid campaign announced last year, he falsely blamed undocumented immigration and so-called sanctuary cities for sparking the epidemic. Even in October 2017, when the president declared a national public-health emergency to confront opioids head on, the wall was part of his
45 argument. Though he proposed measures championed by the public-health community—such as tightening prescription guidelines and qualifications, and helping states with substance-abuse programs—his standard bluster on the wall and immigration followed quickly behind. "For too long, dangerous criminal cartels have
50 been allowed to infiltrate and spread throughout our nation," Trump said during that declaration. "An astonishing 90 percent comes from across the border, [for] which we are building a wall which will help in this problem." According to federal reports, even Trump's public-health emergency hasn't amounted to much. A Government Accountability Office audit of the response found that the Department of Health and Human
55 Services activated just three of the 14 authorities made available by the declaration. While those three measures have accelerated substance-use treatment and research and have promoted medication-assisted treatment—all items recommended by a federal opioids commission—they amount to minor bureaucratic tinkering in the face of a titanic problem. In all, between White House initiatives and Republican-passed
60 legislation over the past few years, the federal response to opioids has acted mostly on the margins. The most recent moves have involved legislation to make it more difficult to ship fentanyl by mail. But there is no massive mobilization. Facing the biggest drug crisis any American president has ever faced, Trump has not
65 publicly fought for that mobilization. He has gone to the mat on the issue of the border wall, grinding the gears of government to a halt for what might be the longest shutdown ever in hopes of receiving \$5 billion for the wall's construction. This is the president's big idea, the one he is clearly willing to expend political capital on to force Congress's hand. It's a fight that he might yet win. But it's also one that he likely knows—as his own
70 administration has made plain—will not save many lives from overdoses.

The Thanksgiving game with the Cowboys is just another insult to Native Americans in a season full of them

NBC News, 22 Nov 2018, Simon Moya-Smith

5 Every November, most Americans are focused on three dominant things: Thanksgiving, buying crap they don't need and, of course, football. This year will mark the eighth year in its history that the National Football League has scheduled the Washington, D.C.-area team — I will not perpetuate its name by using it here because it is incontrovertibly a dictionary-defined racial slur and should be changed immediately — to play the Dallas Cowboys on Thanksgiving. Just
10 for a moment, think of the symbolism in this game: Cowboys against “Indians,” the old American narrative that routinely valorizes the brave cowboy and demonizes the “merciless Indian savages,” as we are referred to in the Declaration of Independence. What's more, the league has continually scheduled this storied rivalry on a holiday – Thanksgiving – that omits the murder and mutilation of indigenous peoples by European invaders often referred to as “pilgrims” or “settlers.” (It violates a fundamental law of time and space to refer to an invader as a “settler” or “pilgrim.” You must first invade before you can settle.) Here is what's even more egregious: Natives are per capita, even hundreds of years later, more likely to be killed by police than any other demographic in the U.S. So, the Cowboys will take on a team whose name is a racial slur (which has historically been used to refer to murdered Indians) on a holiday historically soaked in Native blood (the fact of which many Americans are ignorant) at a time during which Natives are most likely to die at the hands of police... during Native American Heritage month meant to celebrate Native Americans?
15 And in what city does the Washington NFL team represent? Not a city at all, but a federal district, named for... Christopher Columbus. And, lest we forget (or ignore) history, the man opened the slave trade to the western hemisphere, slaughtered and enslaved Natives and set into motion a genocide that, even today, we can see in the numbers: We, indigenous peoples, are the smallest racial minority in our ancestral lands. This means that we are more often the smallest racial minority in almost every setting: Work, of course, and especially at schools — which is unfortunate because
20 another antiquated tradition of November resurrected every year is teachers dressing up their students as pilgrims and Indians. It should be clear that this practice is not a cute, harmless affair, but an American tradition that has lifelong consequences. Those kids will grow up believing that it is perfectly acceptable to dress up as white stereotypes about another race, especially Natives — but it tends to carry over to other racist costumes like blackface and geishas. So it is no surprise — at least to the indigenous peoples of these shores — that when we see fans of the Washington NFL team (or the Kansas City Chiefs or Cleveland Indians) in face paint and headdresses, they were likely once kids who were told that it's just good ol' American fun to “play Indian.” Most of my Native relatives and friends look forward to the end of November because it means the annual autumn hostilities — from Halloween costumes to baseball season to fantasies of indigenous settler cooperation — are coming to a close, for at least a little while. Indeed, those hostilities are always there, but at least the colonialist victory lap every fall shuts down for a bit.
30 But just before the close of November, there's one more insult the U.S. feels it must deal to Natives, like a quintessential middle finger as one walks away: Native American Heritage Day itself. It should be the annual time of year during which this century's Americans celebrate and honor and learn about the innumerable accomplishments and contributions indigenous peoples have given and still give to the world. After all, we gave you chocolate, tobacco and even the antagonists for the racist Hollywood westerns people seem to love so much.
35 And it would make sense that such a day would be officially held in early November — when kids are in school — so they can learn about Billy Mills, the Native Olympian and Gold Medalist, read about Wilma Mankiller, the first female chief of the Cherokee Nation, and even today learn about Debra Haaland and Sharice Davids, the first two Native women to ever be elected to Congress. But no: Native American Heritage Day was officially lumped together with — you guessed it — Black Friday. And I can't imagine people standing in long lines in the frigid cold outside of some big-box retailer turning to a fellow shopper who they most likely elbowed in the ribs and saying, “Oh, hey, by the way, Happy Native American Heritage Day!”
40 November, at least for Natives, is not the most pleasant month but, perhaps in time — with the proliferation of social media, which allows people to read our wisdom in real-time (follow #NativeTwitter for the latest), and as we push ourselves deeper into the American dialogue — sports teams won't be named after racist slurs, teachers won't dress up their kiddos as white stereotypes of Indians and people will reshape their beloved Thanksgiving holiday to reflect history, not myths and lies.
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Note du jury: the term the journalist refuses to use is “Redskins”, which is a racial slur

Two Scoops of Vanilla With Extra Vanilla on Top : Biden's boring, conventional campaign is the comfort food many Democratic voters want, Josh Vorees, April 30 2019, Slate

1 It is hard to imagine a more conventional start to a presidential campaign than the one Joe Biden has put together. The 76-year-old kicked things off with a video in which he spoke directly to the camera about “what makes America, America.” He followed that with a string of endorsements from establishment politicians and a big-ticket fundraising dinner with corporate lobbyists. He then sat down for his first extended interview
5 Friday on the soft-focus set of *The View*. At his first rally Monday, at a union hall in Pittsburgh, he stepped on stage to the same Bruce Springsteen song used by Barack Obama for his 2012 reelection effort. The speech that followed was heavy on timeless stump filler—“*When I travel this country and I meet people like all of you...*”—and light on surprises. Biden’s strategy is so conventional that it can look boring, particularly for journalists like myself who have a professional bias toward things that are new and different, and it looks the
10 same to an activist base trying to shake up the status quo. But Biden’s uncreative approach looks like something else to those Democrats most desperate to defeat Donald Trump: comforting. Biden, after all, isn’t promising a political revolution, as Bernie Sanders is, or proposing to fundamentally reshape the system like Elizabeth Warren is. He wouldn’t make history as the first female president, like Warren or Kamala Harris, or the first openly gay one, like Pete Buttigieg. He does not support Medicare for All or the Green New Deal,
15 either of which would radically alter swaths of the U.S. economy. Likewise, Biden isn’t telling voters that he’s found a way to harness small-donor funding and resist the pressures of wealthy donors, nor is he plotting a new path to Electoral College victory. Instead, Biden is offering Democrats a generous serving of familiar (and forgiving) comfort food—and so far a whole bunch of them are eating it up.

20 As of Tuesday afternoon, there had been four major new polls released since Biden formally entered the race, and all four show the former vice president expanding both his base of support and his lead on field. And while post-announcement bumps can be fleeting, the surveys also confirm that Biden’s appeal extends well beyond the white, working-class men most often associated with a candidate who calls himself “middle-class Joe.” The polls found, for instance, that Biden actually fares better with women than he does with men, and he performs even better with nonwhite voters than he does with white ones. The diversity of Biden’s coalition
25 complicates one of the biggest knocks against him, which is that his lived experience as a white man has left him a poor fit to lead an increasingly diverse Democratic Party. Biden sits at 39 percent in the new CNN survey, up a rather remarkable 11 percentage points from where he was last month and up 24 percentage points above his closest rival in the poll, Sanders, at 15 percent. Biden is at 38 percent in the new Quinnipiac poll, up 9 points from where he was last month and up 26 points on his closest rival, Warren at 12 percent. Biden’s
30 gains were a little more modest in the new HarrisX/ScottRasmussen.com survey (up 4 points) and the latest Morning Consult poll (up 6 points), though the latter was conducted over a weeklong stretch that began several days before Biden’s launch. Evidence of Biden’s surprising strength lies beneath the topline as well. In the Morning Consult poll, he fared better than any other candidate among white men, white women, black men, and black women—but he performed best with black women (47 percent) and the worst among white men
35 (32 percent). CNN found a similar divide along racial lines: Biden was the choice of an even 50 percent of nonwhite voters, compared to just 29 percent of white voters. And Quinnipiac found similar, albeit smaller, splits along both race and gender lines. That suggests that Biden’s attempt to sell himself as the man who can win over Trump voters has found a more receptive audience among groups less likely to be Trump voters. Biden’s popularity with women and people of color speaks to the reality that they disproportionately suffer the harms and dangers of Trump’s America; it’s natural that they might be seeking the safety of the candidate they think has the best chance of defeating Trump. Early primary polls can’t predict the future—as Presidents Rudy Giuliani and Jeb Bush will remind you—but they offer clues. When FiveThirtyEight crunched 40 years’
40 worth of early polling recently, it found that a well-known candidate who polled nationally between 20 and 35 percent during the first half of the year before the primaries went on to win the nomination 36 percent of the time. Success was far more common for similar candidates who polled above 35 percent during that same stretch of time, at which point his or her odds quickly approach 50 percent and climb higher from there. If Biden’s early success holds through the summer, then he could conceivably go from being the front-runner with the best chance in a crowded field to the undeniable favorite—better positioned than all of his challengers combined. That wouldn’t make for the most surprising, dramatic primary, but the Democratic rank and file
45 would probably be just fine with that.
50

Trump's Space Ambitions Are Too Big for One President

Marina Koren *The Atlantic*, Jan 24, 2019

It is not the job of presidents to know the specifics of space exploration and its mind-bending physics, or to contemplate deeply the timescales and technology required for a high-stakes mission to another planet. But usually they have some sense of what's remotely possible, and of what they've asked their space agency to do. In the spring of 2017, President Donald Trump signed a significant piece of legislation about the future of NASA. The bill, among other things, reaffirmed a top priority for the American space program: sending humans to Mars by the 2030s.

Then, it seems, the president forgot all about it. A month after signing the bill, Trump reportedly asked the then-acting administrator of NASA whether the space agency could send American astronauts to Mars by the end of his first term, and even offered him "all the money you could ever need" to make it happen. The NASA official politely turned him down, explaining that such a fast turnaround to a distant planet wasn't possible. The exchange, which took place in the Oval Office, appears in *Team of Vipers*, a forthcoming book by the former White House official Cliff Sims, and was first reported by New York magazine this week.

For anyone who knows about space travel, this encounter amounts to a breathtaking misunderstanding by a leader of the state of his nation's space program. But it's only the latest such mishap in Trump's presidency. More than many presidents, Trump has been eager to talk about American ambitions in the cosmos. But his enthusiasm has clashed with his disinterest in the details of the complicated, risky requirements of actually sending people off this planet.

According to Sims, the discussion he describes took place at the White House in April 2017, as Trump prepared to make a very long-distance video call from the Oval Office to the International Space Station. Peggy Whitson, a NASA astronaut, had broken the American record for the longest time spent in space, and the president was going to congratulate her.

About 10 minutes before the call, which was live-streamed to the public, Trump "suddenly turned toward" Robert Lightfoot Jr., the acting administrator, and asked him, "What's our plan for Mars?" Lightfoot explained that NASA hopes to put people on the planet by the 2030s. "But is there any way we could do it by the end of my first term?" Trump asked. Sims writes that a fidgeting Lightfoot tried to explain some of the technical challenges of a Mars mission. Trump was undeterred: "But what if I gave you all the money you could ever need to do it? What if we sent NASA's budget through the roof, but focused entirely on that instead of whatever else you're doing now. Could it work then?" Lightfoot said he was sorry, but no. The interaction, according to Sims, left the president "visibly disappointed." [...]

During the Apollo era, the agency's annual funding accounted for 4.5 percent of the federal budget. It shrunk to less than half a percent by the end of Richard Nixon's term, and has remained there since. But cash is no substitute for time, and space travel is difficult to rush, even with Cold War tensions hovering menacingly in the background. Eight years elapsed between John F. Kennedy's declaration to go to the moon and Neil Armstrong's first steps on the lunar surface, and several Americans died in the effort to get there.

Timing beyond Earth matters, too. A Mars mission would ideally leave Earth when the two planets are close together in their orbit around the sun, a cosmic alignment that occurs every two years. The configuration would help shave off a few months on the journey to the red planet. Trump would have only two chances in the rest of his term and in a potential second term to deploy a crewed mission, 2020 and 2022. NASA isn't ready for either.

The United States currently can't launch its own astronauts from its own launchpads, and pays the Russian government tens of millions of dollars per seat on the Soyuz launch system to carry astronauts to the International Space Station. NASA is working on a rocket designed to someday send astronauts to the moon and Mars, the Space Launch System, but a test flight, with people on board, won't come until 2022.

Off the ground, the technical challenges of a Mars mission would be immense. Armstrong and two other astronauts got along just fine in a cozy space capsule, but it took the astronauts just over three days to reach the moon. A trip to Mars would take as long as nine months, and astronauts would require a far more complex vessel. It would need to be hardy enough to protect them from cell-warping cosmic radiation, and roomy enough so people don't get on one another's nerves. This miraculous technology does not exist.

There's an easy explanation for why Trump wants to send Americans to Mars during his presidency. It's the same reason he enjoys speaking publicly about space exploration in general, and has actually done so more than other presidents, according to historians: People think space is cool. That includes congressional lawmakers, and space exploration enjoys some rare bipartisan support on Capitol Hill. For Trump, space policy is a safe topic. It's an instant applause line. It gets good ratings, and to Trump, that's what matters.

In search of lost time: how nostalgia broke politics, Samuel Earles, June 3 2019, New Statesman

2 In 2017, the word “*déclinisme*” entered France’s Larousse dictionary, describing the belief that a state of decay is sweeping through society. Recent polls find that, in most Western democracies, the majority of citizens believe the world has got worse, and say they no longer feel at home in their country. This is nostalgia in its fullest sense: not just a rose-tinted recollection of the past, but a longing for a lost home. In Britain, slogans
5 from across the political spectrum like “Rebuilding Britain” (Labour), “Politics is Broken” (Change UK), and “Take Back Control” (Vote Leave) speak to the same sense of loss, differing only in the reasons why it exists. In Europe, EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier identifies the cause of Brexit as a “nostalgia for the past”. For an inchoate group of Western reactionaries, including nationalists, white supremacists, but also supposedly high-minded academics, liberal journalists and politicians, the culprit is clear: high levels of immigration have
10 hollowed out a sense of social harmony or homeliness. In Eric Kaufmann’s recent book *Whiteshift* — one of the books of 2018, according to the *Financial Times* — the Birkbeck academic declares that, faced with unprecedented demographic change, only stronger borders will protect white identity and ensure “a return to more relaxed, harmonious and trusting societies.” In an 8,000-word cover story for the *Atlantic*, David Frum concurred: only slashing immigration numbers would “restore to Americans the feeling of belonging to one
15 united nation, responsible for the care and flourishing of all its citizens.” Hillary Clinton and Tony Blair have come to similar conclusions. This argument is always presented as realpolitik rather than xenophobia — a reflection of the facts, rather than people’s prejudices — and a weight of statistical evidence is deployed to defend it. But as to when this happy period in the past we want to “return to” actually existed — the America that was “responsible for the care and flourishing of all its citizens” — here, the details suddenly run dry. All
20 the authors seem to know is why it no longer does now: too many minorities, too much immigration. In Svetlana Boym’s classic text, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), the Russian academic saw this scapegoating as the shadow of nostalgia. The word itself derives from fusing the Ancient Greek *nostos* (return home) and *algos* (pain or longing), and we all feel it to some degree. But where a shared sense of displacement and longing could foster empathy and solidarity, Boym noticed that it often raises up walls instead. “The moment we try
25 to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways,” Boym wrote. “*Algia* — longing — is what we share, yet *nostos* — the return home — is what divides us.”

Boym famously drew a distinction between two kinds of nostalgia: restorative, and reflective. Whereas someone with “reflective nostalgia” remains wistfully aware of loss, longing and memory’s gloss, “restorative nostalgia” carries dreams of resurrection, mistaking time’s silver lining for truth and tradition. “This kind of
30 nostalgia characterises national and nationalist revivals all over the world,” Boym wrote. “It is the promise to rebuild the ideal home that lies at the core of many powerful ideologies of today.” The election of Donald Trump was an archetypal case of this nostalgic nationalism, prominent in Britain, Brazil, India and elsewhere. During his campaign, Trump ended almost every one of his rallies with a variation on his now notorious slogan: “We will make America great again!”, “... wealthy again!”, “...strong again!”, “... safe again!” — all
35 insurgent cries that, taken together, perhaps amounted to just one: Make America Feel like Home Again. This message — which was made explicit in the 2017 election slogan of France’s fellow ethno-nationalist, Marine Le Pen: “*On est chez nous!*” (This is our home!) — was not meant for everyone. Similarly, in Germany, nationalist dreams of restoration are defined by their divisiveness. The far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* has brought back the concept of *Heimat* – roughly translated as “homeland” but more emotionally charged
40 and, for some, all too entwined with Nazi ideology. In this reckoning, today’s turmoil apparently stems not from political forces, but from the direction we’re standing in. The liberal — like the orthodox Marxist — will always say “Forward, not Back,” impelled by a belief in unerring progress. But these opposing standpoints — nostalgia and its antithesis, futurephilia — are more similar than they seem. Both offer remedies for tumultuous times and give us strength to continue. Neither are completely wrong or right in their direction of
45 travel: society can become both better and worse, at the same time. But the widespread belief that today’s nostalgia is new — “Europe today is threatened by an epidemic of nostalgia,” another *NYT* op-ed warned on 1 May – is borne of its own amnesia. Nostalgia is a cultural trend we have been drowning in for at least fifty years. While capitalist modernity has hastened the pace of change, sharpened our sense of loss and caged the capacity to imagine alternative futures, this is not a new phenomenon either; it dates back decades. In 2001,
50 Boym saw the same “global epidemic of nostalgia” plaguing her present day. “Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defence mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals,” she wrote. It is, she concluded, “a symptom of our age.” (...)

A Surprisingly Simple Way to Help Level the Playing Field of College Admissions, Sahil Chinoy, Aug. 27, 2018, New York Times

4 New research contains a message for high school students, especially low-income ones, who want to go to college: Take the SAT early and often. It's already clear from earlier studies that lack of information is a big reason many less affluent students don't make it to college. They get less help navigating the complex process of applying. A new study finds another specific instance of this: Underrepresented students are less likely to
5 take college admission tests more than once. Encouraging them to retake tests — as many of their high-income, white and Asian-American peers do — could close a substantial portion of the income and racial gap in enrollment at four-year colleges. That's the conclusion of a working paper released on Monday by Joshua S. Goodman, Oded Gurantz and Jonathan Smith. The three economists studied over 10 million students who took the SAT reasoning test, one of two standard college admissions exams (along with the ACT), and
10 analyzed the effect that retaking the exam had on the students' subsequent scores and college prospects.

They found that, on average, retaking it improved SAT scores by nearly 90 points out of 2,400 — more for low scorers. Students who retook the test were likelier to enroll in a four-year (vs. two-year) college, probably because improved scores made them stronger applicants. Four-year colleges often have higher graduation rates, so retaking the SAT improves not only the chance of getting into college but also of getting a degree. Mr.
15 Goodman is an associate professor at Harvard. Mr. Gurantz, an assistant professor at Missouri, and Mr. Smith, an assistant professor at Georgia State, also consult for the College Board, which administers the SAT. Although the study examined SAT scores, the results would probably be similar for the ACT standardized test, the researchers said. More than half of SAT-takers sit for the exam more than once; high-income students and those who identify as white or Asian are more likely to retake tests. For example, students with a family
20 income over \$100,000 are 21 percentage points more likely to retake tests than students with family income below \$50,000. Not everyone might know it's possible to take the SAT as many times as you want. Other research has shown that some students, especially low-income ones far from urban centers, are not well-informed about college admissions. They overestimate costs, miss important deadlines and don't apply to selective colleges that they're qualified to attend. Such information gaps partly explain why high-income
25 students are six times more likely to graduate from college than students from poorer families. A crucial question is whether retaking the tests actually raises scores. It's possible that the difference in outcome instead reflects differences among students. Retakers might be more motivated, or know that their first attempt did not accurately reflect their abilities. So they might score higher than those who take the exam once, even if there were no advantage from familiarity or steadier nerves. To address this, the researchers exploited "left-
30 digit bias," the phenomenon that we pay more attention to the left-most digits in a number, which is why stores often have prices like \$8.99 instead of \$9. Students scoring just below a round-number threshold were more likely to retake the test.

(...)To encourage retaking, the study's authors recommend making clear to low-income students that fee waivers are available. But financial barriers aren't the whole story, because more than half of students who
35 used a waiver didn't retake the exam. The researchers also suggest prompting students to take their first SAT earlier. More than 40 percent of minority SAT-takers first took the test in 12th grade, compared with around 20 percent of white and Asian-American students, according to the paper. The average student first took the test at the end of 11th grade. Many states have started offering the SAT or ACT during school hours at no cost and requiring students to take it. Studies in several of those states show that doing so uncovers students capable
40 of attending college who would not otherwise have taken the test. The new results could motivate states and districts to move the exam date earlier and offer opportunities to retake it during school hours. Alternatively, the College Board could prohibit retaking tests entirely, or schools could accept only results from a student's first try. But that might merely prompt advantaged students to shift their energy toward preparing for one attempt, without addressing the disparities in information and resources throughout the application process.
45 Between unlimited retakes and no retakes at all, "it's entirely unclear which creates the most inequality," Mr. Smith said. But under the current system, he added, encouraging disadvantaged students to take the SAT more than once is a relatively inexpensive way to improve their chances of attending a four-year college. "Relative to the world we live in today, encouraging disadvantaged low-income students and minorities to retake the SAT more often would help close the college enrollment gap," Mr. Goodman said.

'The art world tolerates abuse' - the fight to change museum wall labels Nadja Sayej, 28 Nov 2018, *The Guardian*

5 Earlier this month, Chicago artist Michelle Hartney walked into the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and placed her own wall label directly beside Paul Gauguin's *Two Tahitian Women* from 1899 – without asking for permission. It's part of Hartney's own artwork *Correct Art History*, where the artist leaves wall labels to call out sexist, misogynist and abusive artists when museums will not. Her project includes calling out Pablo Picasso (who

10 called women machines for suffering), Balthus (who sexualized prepubescent girls) and Gauguin (a pedophile who had three child brides in Tahiti). Her placard reads: "We can no longer worship at the altar of creative genius while ignoring the price all too often paid for that genius," quoting Roxane Gay. "In truth, we should have learned this lesson long ago, but we have a cultural fascination with creative and powerful men who are also 'mercurial' or 'volatile', with men who behave badly."

15 While museum wall labels were once used to explain the "title, artist, date" status of an artwork, they're quickly becoming a place to spark debate, rewrite history and acknowledge untold stories. In light of the #MeToo movement, wall labels are finally starting to include the controversial information that surrounds an artwork or artist. It could soon become the expectation. "Providing biographical information about artists on wall labels is a common practice with museums, but when it comes to sexual violence, gross sexism or racism, the museums, curators and critics are often choosing to eliminate this information," said Hartney. "It results in them taking control of the narrative surrounding male artists, such as Picasso, Gauguin, Chuck Close and many others."

20 But getting rid of controversial artworks, often works that protesters demand be taken down, is not the answer, says Hartney. "We need these works of art to remain in museums so we can learn from them," she said. "Educating and presenting the truth is how we learn and do better; this information would be a powerful educational moment because it will show how long the patriarchy has ruled over women." Just as confederate monuments from the south have been taken down this year, as well as the statue of controversial gynecologist J Marion Sims from Central Park, adding a plaque offering historical context is not enough. Wall labels need to be updated in a different way to look back on art history that reflects the present. The Worcester Art Museum in Massachusetts has added wall labels to portraits of figures with ties to slavery, wealthy patrons like John Freake, painted by American artists Gilbert Stuart and John Singleton Copley. A wall label in the American wing reads: "These paintings depict the sitters as they wish to be seen – their best selves – rather than simply recording appearance. Yet, a great deal of information is effaced in these works, including the sitters' reliance on chattel slavery, often referred to as America's 'peculiar institution'. Many of the people represented here derived wealth and social status from this system of violence and oppression, which was legal in Massachusetts until 1783 and in regions of the United States until 1865."

30 The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston added a wall label this year to address Austrian artist Egon Schiele, who faced criminal charges for showing erotic drawings to a child (his charges of kidnapping and raping a 13-year-old girl in 1912 were dropped in court). The wall label was updated to read: "Recently, Schiele has been mentioned in the context of sexual misconduct by artists, of the present and the past. This stems in part from specific charges (ultimately dropped as unfounded) of kidnapping and molestation." It also notes that Schiele "has long had a reputation as a transgressive at society's edges". Earlier this year, the Whitney Museum of American Art came under fire for showing Dana Schutz's painting of Emmett Till, the 14-year-old black boy who was accused of flirting with a white woman in 1955, and was lynched. Schutz's painting of Till's open casket showed at the Whitney Biennial, causing an uproar from protesters. The curators kept the painting up but acknowledged the complaints in an updated wall label that read, in part: "This painting has been at the center of a heated debate around questions of cultural appropriation, the ethics of representation, the political efficacy of painting and the possibilities or limitations of empathy."

35 As a partial solution, feminist art collective, the Guerrilla Girls, recently designed a poster entitled *3 ways to write a museum wall label when the artist is a sexual predator*, which uses Close, the artist accused of sexual misconduct, to show a three-tier option of portraying the artist and his accusations. The lowest-ranking wall label is for museums afraid of alienating billionaire trustees and collectors, the middle category is for museums conflicted about disclosing an artist's abuse, and the longest, strongest wall label is for museums who need help from the art collective, where the placard reads: "The art world tolerates abuse because it believes art is above it all, and rules don't always apply to 'genius' white male artists. WRONG!" But what surprises the Guerrilla Girls is they have not seen museum wall labels change much in light of several artists' sexual assault or misconduct accusations. "Every museum is

40 deliberating right now about how to respond to the #MeToo movement," said a representative from the group.

50

Who is really responsible for Brexit? The Queen

If Brexiters want true sovereignty, then the monarchy will have to be abolished

The Guardian, 16 April 2019, Suzanne Moore

Activate the Queen. She is the only person who can sort out this chaos. Politicians can't, and the "people" certainly can't because the will of the people is a floating buffet at which all stuff their faces, but still yearn for a proper dinner. So, for instance, a "people's vote" will either undermine democracy by ignoring the first people's vote or underscore democracy by having more of it.

5 Theresa May can't sort it out. I feel about her as my friend used to feel about her husband: "He has been dead for years; it's just that no one has told him."

10 What we need is a grownup to calm everything down. Who better than the Queen, hatted and handbagged up; dutiful, but with a dry wit, apparently? Everyone loves the Queen. I saw Michelle Obama at the O2 at the weekend, talking about how touched she was that the Queen wore the "itty-bitty little pin" that the Obamas gave her. Living the dream. Just not mine.

It has been suggested that the Queen could stop Brexit, and the very notion is intriguing – this longing for unquestionable authority is a sign of our inherent repression. But this longing is dangerous, my friends, and it is the opposite of democracy. The Queen is not personally accountable for Brexit, but she presides over an institution that symbolises and legitimises much of the inequality that led to it.

15 Our politics is broken, our systems of representation cannot cope with globalisation, migration or technology. People feel abandoned. Westminster is falling down. Board it up like a shop that no one goes to any more. Over and over, the mantras of austerity and neoliberalism are chanted by the left as the reasons for the leave vote. The right answer back by accusing the left of cultural Marxism. But what does the right believe in? Philistine capitalism – and life in a permanent sense of déjà vu about a war they never fought
20 in. They also talk about vassal states and sovereignty.

What does being a sovereign power mean? In our case, it means having a monarchy that legitimates hereditary privilege, the Lords and owning half of Scotland. It means that power is an accident of birth, but God help anyone who disses the Queen. We not only enact our serfdom; we embrace it by accepting that the monarchy is above ordinary politics.

25 The younger generation of royals is still locked in a symbiotic relationship with the tabloids. They do a lot of charity work – including "difficult" causes, such as mental health. They showed more empathy at Grenfell Tower than May did, but any Dalek would have done that, so the bar is low. What they can't do is embrace the actual, essential cause of the many causes they champion: deep inequality of wealth.

30 Instead, the luckless Duchess of Sussex is now held hostage, breeding in captivity as all royal women must. She has sinned by asking for privacy when the tabloids say that, because the country paid for her wedding, it's our baby. By this logic, the afterbirth should be brought out on a platter and inspected by all us loyal subjects.

But the serious question is this: how will any of our institutions ever be reformed and how will we become a modern country while bowing to this feudal system?

35 The magic has worked if we still believe that the monarchy – embodied in a dutiful and doughty old woman – is a superior system to boring old representative democracy. Yet even sensible people fall for the circus of honours, touches of ermine and empire, while young working-class men get their legs blown off to serve "Queen and country".

40 Constitutional reform makes most people's eyes glaze over, even though we can see our chaos is bound up in systems that are no longer viable.

We must start from the bottom up: direct action and local democracy. And then work from the top down: dismantle the archaic monarchy. The Queen cannot solve Brexit because part of what Brexit is about – what is worth keeping? What has been lost? Who has lost out? Who has gained? – is entangled with all she represents.

45 The vote to leave, to be in charge of our own affairs and to change the status quo, has been read as reactionary, but can also be read as revolutionary. When the Queen dies, let the whole monstrous shebang of monarchy go with her. Only then can we be a sovereign country.

Brett Kavanaugh's ugly confirmation fight may reverberate for years inside supreme court, Ed Pilkilton, 11 October 2018, *The Guardian*

4 Leading law scholars are warning that the US supreme court faces months or even years of bitter dispute over whether its new recruit, Brett Kavanaugh, should recuse himself from cases involving sexual violence and party-political partisanship. Kavanaugh finally took his seat on the country's highest court on Tuesday with sexual assault allegations unresolved and his highly contentious testimony before the US Senate still
5 reverberating. During his historically ugly confirmation process, he was accused by three women of sexual misconduct. None of the allegations were proven. But nor were they – as Donald Trump falsely claimed during the swearing in ceremony on Monday – disproven.

How the initial allegations will play out is now a matter of urgent legal debate, as are the accusations of partisanship he leveled at Democratic senators when he claimed they had orchestrated a leftwing conspiracy
10 against him. The most direct questions raised are likely to relate to cases coming before the new court on sexual violence or discrimination. Already percolating their way up the judicial chain and heading for the supreme court are suits demanding that gay and lesbian people be entitled to the same constitutional protections against workplace discrimination as are afforded employees on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin and religion. Other cases that might come before the 53-year-old Kavanaugh – who holds his
15 seat on the court for life – include cases on sexual assault on campuses, family law cases and suits involving the right of those accused of domestic violence to buy guns. Julie Goldscheld, professor of law specializing in gender issues at CUNY School of Law in New York, said that she was concerned about Kavanaugh's ability to sit impartially in judgment over such matters. "His testimony compounded my concerns both about his temperament and potential bias around issues relating to gender violence, employment discrimination, or any
20 contexts in which sexual assault comes up," she said. Goldscheld was one of 2,600 law professors – about a quarter of all full-time law scholars in the country – who signed a joint letter opposing Kavanaugh's confirmation. One of its organizers, Bernard Harcourt, professor of law and political science at Columbia University, told the Guardian that another major area of concern relates to cases with a party-political bearing, given Kavanaugh's highly partisan performance in front of the Senate judiciary committee.

25 In a fraught hearing of the committee following testimony from his main accuser, Dr Christine Blasey Ford, Kavanaugh aggressively defended himself in party-political terms. He accused Democratic senators on the panel of waging a "calculated and orchestrated political hit" against him, "fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election ... revenge on behalf of the Clintons and millions of dollars in money from outside leftwing opposition groups". Later, he admitted in the Wall Street Journal that he had
30 "said a few things I should not have said", without specifying the actual comments. Supreme court justices in the past have displayed partisan behavior, such as the late Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas who provoked criticism when they attended a 2010 strategy summit hosted by the far-rightwing Koch brothers. But never before have justices revealed their own party-political allegiances so viscerally in public.

35 "Any kind of issue closely related to impeachment or investigations of possible corruption or tax fraud – any of those issues would fall squarely in the bailiwick of deeply partisan politics," Harcourt said. "That would in turn trigger doubts about Kavanaugh's conspiratorial thinking that was evident during his confirmation." In all such cases, a central dispute is likely to be whether Kavanaugh should recuse himself. The US supreme court is unique among federal courts in that the justices effectively police themselves – a practice that has been widely criticized. The nine justices can and do recuse themselves, frequently without explanation.
40 Litigants, if they dare, can also file a motion calling on individual justices to step aside for reasons of conflict, but the decision is left to the justice in question with no right to challenge the outcome.

The pattern has been seen with Clarence Thomas who was accused during his 1991 confirmation process of sexually harassing Anita Hill. Thomas has gone on to sit on several cases relating to sexual harassment in the workplace, without recusing himself. Judith Resnik, Arthur Liman professor of law at Yale Law School, said
45 Kavanaugh's presence, given what happened during the confirmation, had "put a pall over the supreme court. The Senate hearings were shocking, and have left a terrible aftertaste." She added: "Kavanaugh has so aligned himself with the Republican party it casts a shadow: will he be able to judge cases which would expressly benefit the Republicans?"

The 7 per cent problem

By Janice Turner *The New Statesman*, 30 January 2019

This book's preface begins with what I'd call a dinner party disclaimer. "We were both privately educated," write the authors. "Our children have all been educated at state grammar schools; in neither case did we move to the areas (Kent and south-west London) because of the existence of those schools." Honestly, we didn't mean to favour highly selective education for our kids. [Apologetic shrug.] It just happened.

5 Given Francis Green and David Kynaston's chosen postcodes we will never know how they'd have fared in the great bourgeois lefty conscience test. To wit: do I send my child to the huge, underfunded, local comprehensive or stump up for small class sizes, brainy, well-motivated peers, acres of grounds and limitless opportunity? I say this not to score a cheap point. But because the desire to leverage our own children the best possible education is the crux of the "private school problem". And it makes hypocrites of many parents including Diane Abbott (City of London), Shami Chakrabarti (Dulwich College), many Guardian writers (such as Polly Toynbee), and me. 10 Moreover it answers the book's fundamental question: why, in a democracy perpetually wringing its hands about social mobility, do schools that educate just 7 per cent of the country but account for 74 per cent of judges, 71 per cent of generals and 29 per cent of MPs still exist? Because while public opinion favours reform or even abolition, when it comes down to late-night, guilt-wracked decisions the answer remains: "If you can afford it, why would you not?" Plus for millions, like me growing up in Yorkshire, who had never met a public school 15 alumnus, sending your kids to Eton and thus entering the elite is a dream akin to owning a yacht or dating a supermodel. When Stephen Geddes, the son of a supermarket worker from Dingle, Liverpool, was accepted on a scholarship to Eton, the online comments were not, "Why are you perpetuating entrenched inequality?" but, "Well done, young man. The world is your oyster." As if he'd won The X-Factor or the lottery, which in every 20 sense he had. As *Engines of Privilege* explores, the public schools appear to left-wing politicians a delicious, low-hanging fruit. Only up close are they revealed as prickly and poisonous. As with House of Lords reform, ministers end up parking the issue in a "maybe later" file and get on with less emblematic but easier matters. Anthony Crosland ripped up the grammar schools, those great social mobility engines for the less wealthy. But his "we must grasp the nettle of the public schools" rapidly switched, as one adviser put it, to fear he "might 25 impose unfreedom" on how parents spent their money.

First, for the majority of the population who have never set foot in a modern public school, Green and Kynaston outline exactly what is on sale for an average £14,500-a-year secondary day place or £30,500 for boarding. In contrast with the austere but erudite institutions that turned out imperial servants via cold showers, rigger and Latin, the offspring of the rich now enjoy the educational equivalent of a VIP departure lounge. My own sons' 30 alma mater has just built a cloud chamber particle detector and its new sixth-form common room resembles an Apple store. Nonetheless the school relentlessly taps me up for donations. For what? A Hadron collider, a helipad, a spa?

Public schools spend three times as much per pupil than state schools: much of this is on lower teacher ratios and resources. But a huge amount is splurged on egregious projects to compete in the glossy prospectus arms race to 35 attract rich, especially Russian or Chinese, parents. ("You should always have a building on the go, like your knitting," says the high mistress of St Paul's Girls.) Eton has an Olympic grade rowing lake – in fact the actual 2012 Olympics were held on it. Stowe has an equestrian centre, golf course and nightclub apparently kitted out from the remnants of Crazy Larry's in Chelsea. St Paul's Girls has a restaurant whose typical menu includes Spanish smoky samfaina with eggs and rocket. Rooms at Roedean are en suite with, according to Tatler, "chic 40 interiors, designer lighting and sea views". Private schools in London have 59 theatres compared to 42 in the West End. [...]

As society celebrates diversity and inclusion, being raised in an exclusive bubble turns from benefit to disadvantage. The ability to understand, respect and work with people of all backgrounds will be ever more 45 prized. As a girl from a crap northern comprehensive, whenever I visit an elite school I'm simultaneously full of envy, awe, class rage and a queasiness that being bathed from birth in luxury and lavish resources may not be wholly good for a child. Already the cannier public schools are shape-shifting, trying to forestall greater state interference by unilaterally upping their bursary schemes. Around a quarter of Etonians are on bursaries. An email arrived this morning from my sons' old school heralding a rise from 10 to 20 per cent of assisted places. 50 Schools know bursaries are a win-win: they benefit less privileged and BAME children and so counter accusations of exclusivity, while enabling them to cream off the brightest, most driven working-class kids and enhance their league table place. Meanwhile the elite schools raise their PR game, their websites declaring that academic excellence is leavened with "mindfulness" and a "nurturing environment"; so they appear drivers of modernity, not curators of the past. The engines of privilege are unlikely to be scrapped. Rather, as this book suggests, they will be hybrids.

Universities should resist calls to 'decolonise' the curriculum

Doug Stokes, *The Spectator*, Coffee House Blog, 18 February 2019

Meghan Markle has reportedly backed calls to 'decolonise the curriculum'. This campaign to promote ethnic minority thinkers in place of 'male, pale and stale' academics also has support from the Labour party. Angela Rayner, shadow education secretary, has said that 'like much of our establishment, our universities are too male, pale and stale and do not represent the communities that they serve or modern Britain'. If Labour comes to power, Rayner promised to use the Office For Students to change things. But this move to 'decolonise the curriculum' is in fact a big mistake.

Firstly, the campaign conjures up images of dusty old men engaged in an unconscious conspiracy to ensure 'non-western' worldviews are stamped out. The implications is that those from an ethnic minority and women are locked out of the academy. In reality, social science and humanities departments are nearly all progressive and left-wing. From Edward Said's post-colonial critique of Western Orientalism, Marxist critiques of global imperialism, through to the postmodern deconstructions of 'Western hegemony' by the likes of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, Western social science and humanities are full of alternative viewpoints. The more telling challenge would be to find a university offering any course, anywhere, that celebrates the achievements of Western civilisation. For many academics, all evils seemingly flow from the West.

Secondly, the movement to 'decolonise' the university is highly selective in its cherry picking of facts and targets. The target of the campaign is the original sin of Western imperialism and the horrors of transatlantic slavery. But this focus on the bad ignores the West's role in bringing this barbaric trade to an end. In its reading of history, the Royal Navy's suppression of the transatlantic slave trade, the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of male and pale soldiers in the US's civil war to end American slavery, or the continuity of non-Western slavery today – India is now ranked as having over 18 million souls in bondage – are overlooked or largely ignored.

Thirdly, this movement comes at an odd time geopolitically. Trump's trade wars with China and his seeming disdain for US-led security alliances, the remarkable economic rise of China and its global assertiveness, an increasingly restive and illiberal Russia and a still bubbling Islamist insurgency in the Middle East, means that the Western liberal international order has never looked weaker.

As a result of the West's post-war boom (which helped fund the social welfare state and universities throughout Europe) the post-1968 generation of left intellectuals could call for revolution confident that, if their dreams of social transformation took place, they would do so at what was then the high point of Western economic power. The theory was that if Western capitalism could be overthrown, its global power would be used to usher in a new socialist utopian dawn. Things are very different today. Western power is in decline. So too is intellectual self confidence in the West about our shared cultural and intellectual heritage. While universities in the West battle to 'decolonise' themselves, it's safe to say that this navel-gazing is not taking place elsewhere in the world. Are Chinese, Russian and Islamic academies seeking to engage in endless struggle sessions? Is Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping seeking to direct the Russian and Chinese university system to engage in endless auto-critique for the sins of Eastern European colonisation or China's imperialism in large parts of Africa today? I wouldn't bet on it.

Of course it is right for Western academics to engage in critique. But the calls to 'decolonise the curriculum' are selective and look geopolitically dubious. Rather than a call for equality, they are a bid to reinsert racial and gender categorisation into intellectual life where it isn't needed. So while Meghan Markle's intentions might be good, the last thing our universities need are to have 'male, pale and stale' voices sidelined.

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Mark Zuckerberg's Power Is Unprecedented , Alexis C. Madrigal, *The Atlantic*, May 9, 2019

- 4 The Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes made a personal, riveting case for breaking up Facebook in a new essay published in *The New York Times* today. His argument hinges on the idea that Mark Zuckerberg is a “good, kind person” but one whose “power is unprecedented and un-American” and whose “influence is staggering, far beyond that of anyone else in the private sector or in government.” A major, if not *the*, reason
5 to break up Facebook is that, as the philosopher Kanye West once put it: “No one man should have all that power.” What makes the situation complicated, however, is that the *type* of power Mark Zuckerberg holds is what’s actually unprecedented.

In the terms of traditional power, Facebook and its CEO are not overwhelming by historical or contemporary standards. Militarily, of course, Facebook is a nonentity. Zuckerberg commands no world-class army, which
10 ranks him significantly below Chinese, American, and Russian leaders. Politically, Zuckerberg has no base, and despite being very famous, is quite unpopular. Culturally, Zuckerberg does not have the mystique of Steve Jobs, nor has his philanthropy turned him into a wise nobleman like Bill Gates (not yet, anyway). Financially, his personal fortune is among the world’s top 10, but there are a lot of other billionaires with comparable fortunes, from the space enthusiast Jeff Bezos to the many children of very successful businesspeople.

- 15 Yet his power is great. Hughes is correct that we’ve never seen anything like it. Mark Zuckerberg controls Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp—three of the five most popular communication tools on the planet, alongside Alphabet’s YouTube and Tencent’s WeChat. In many countries, Zuckerberg’s products *are* the internet. They are the media for information dispersal—like a newspaper or television channel—as well as for peer-to-peer communications, like an old-school telecom network. They are also a crucial ligature for small
20 businesses, as internet home, customer-service desk, and advertising platform, and for direct sales through tools such as Facebook Marketplace.

Who is Zuckerberg like? The best parallels might be the newspaper barons, such as William Randolph Hearst or Rupert Murdoch. But it’s more like if all three broadcast-television networks of the 20th century were owned by the same person, in one corporation that he completely controlled, and that also was the central
25 venue for political speech and finding an electrician. Or maybe, as we’ve argued, he’ll be this generation’s Bob Moses, who, in his quest to remake New York, first acquired power through building, and then by any means necessary. As Max Read has pointed out, no one can quite figure out what Facebook is, and by extension, no one really knows what Zuckerberg’s power could do. While Zuckerberg has been driven to dominate his corporate rivals, he has yet to use the power that he holds to do anything other than compete
30 (that we know of, at least).

What could an evil Zuckerberg do? Because Facebook Inc. has developed the most sophisticated tools for predicting human behavior that the world has ever seen, and because its user bases are the largest in the world, the company could exert more persuasive power over more people than has ever been possible.

- Facebook gets people to use its products, and it uses the actions that people take to manufacture more useful
35 data about their tendencies, as Shoshana Zuboff has laid out in her book *Surveillance Capitalism*. That is to say, all the things we control about interactions with the empire—the friends we have, the photos we post, the text we write—are not the information that Facebook is after. These are the raw material for the machine-learning processes that generate Facebook’s real power: their ability to forecast what you’ll do when faced with a set of choices. And that power is growing with both the data in the system and the development of the
40 artificial intelligences that feed on it. Even if Mark Zuckerberg has never used this power for anything other than getting me to buy sneakers, it probably is not a great idea for one person to have so much predictive capacity about the citizens of the world. That Zuckerberg has not done so might be the best argument for breaking up Facebook *now*—because it’s not too late. Breaking up the company probably would not (immediately) solve the problems we’ve come to associate with the internet. Who knows, it could even
45 exacerbate them. But it would take one major, underappreciated risk out of the future: that Mark Zuckerberg decides to wield the tremendous power he has so far eschewed.

Northern Ireland's young people know their history. If only the rest of Britain did too.

John Harris, *The Guardian*, 12 Feb 2019

Touts are a three-piece rock band from Derry. The name is a reference to the Northern Irish colloquialism for a police informer, which is scrawled and sprayed around their home city; the music they make is full of a sense of Derry's violent past and its uneasy present. It harks back to the distant days of punk rock, but its sheer velocity also speaks of an urge to get on with the future, whatever that might be. The band are part of a lineage of music interwoven with Northern Ireland's difficult politics and history: as the Belfast-based music writer Stuart Bailie's brilliant book *Trouble Songs* puts it, raw art that has "challenged given stories" and provided "succour and a sense of collective worth".

All three Touts members were born at a time when the Troubles were receding into history; two of them were too young to vote in the 2016 EU referendum. Last week, I watched them rehearse, in a freezing room on an edge-of-town industrial estate. They talked about Northern Ireland's political predicament with the kind of incisive eloquence that most English musicians seem to have lost. "Politics is just inescapable, coming from here," said 21-year-old bassist and co-vocalist, Luke McLaughlin. "If you have a platform, you may as well say something." The band's drummer, Jason Feenan, 19, mentioned a video he had seen online of the then-Brexit secretary Dominic Raab being questioned by the Northern Irish MP Sylvia Hermon, and awkwardly admitting that he had never made time to read the Good Friday agreement. "Every household in the North has a copy of it," Feenan marvelled. "You could read it in a day. And someone supposedly negotiating on our behalf couldn't even be bothered." He looked pained. "It's kind of Irish history repeating itself," he said. "A decision's made in England, and we're just dragged along with it."

Over four very sobering days, this was a sentiment I heard time and again. After I left Derry, with ringing ears, I drove along the often labyrinthine border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, stopping to talk to people for whom that largely invisible line had been a complete irrelevance until the great convulsion of June 2016 put it back on the political agenda. Just about everyone I met knew perfectly well that Theresa May's travails over the so-called backstop are the product of politicians and voters elsewhere forgetting about the island of Ireland, only to be reminded that for the people who live there, Brexit represents a profound set of dangers. No one was that surprised about this amnesia, but many were very angry about it.

The boredom with Brexit that I have endlessly encountered in England was nowhere to be seen. Eighty-eight miles from Derry in the old port city of Newry, people talked about a place that had lived in the shadow of the old border for more than 60 years and suffered dire economic consequences, only to undergo an amazing recovery that suddenly feels fragile. Here and elsewhere, there was exasperation at the historical accident that had made Theresa May dependent on the Democratic Unionist party, whose original opposition to the Good Friday agreement still rankles and whose hostility to the backstop is a central part of Northern Ireland's current pain. On the other side of the sectarian divide, in even the sleepest places, I spotted newly printed posters and hoardings demanding a united Ireland, their strident tone betraying the fact that setting out on that road would inevitably trigger no end of strife.

Across the sea, Brexit has triggered a certain obstinacy and aggressive nostalgia among older people, and here, you can pick up something comparable. In the tiny southern Irish border town of Clones, a sixtysomething drinker in a local bar said that Britain could have Brexit if it "gives us back the six counties", while a younger man shook his head at the discomfiting echo of conflicts he obviously wanted to forget. In Enniskillen, a local member of the DUP who had served in the British army told me that if there was any serious attempt to unite Ireland's two halves, "I would stand back, and get my uniform back on, and stand firm with the British."

Everywhere I went, people whose views were less entrenched asked the same set of questions. If the UK leaves the EU with no deal, and Northern Ireland and the Republic are suddenly separated by tariffs and new regulations, would that mean the return of what official-speak calls "border infrastructure"? If it did, wouldn't that give people spoiling for a fight something to shoot at, or blow up? Whatever the prime minister's current contortions, what if Brexit – even with a deal – and the Ireland envisaged by the Good Friday agreement turn out to be mutually exclusive?

Such points were usually balanced by a set of convictions people seemed to be clinging to: that no one wants the border back, and any kind of reversal of the peace process is unthinkable. But then the unease would return as it was acknowledged that Brexit is a veritable Pandora's box, brimming with unforeseen consequences.

Asian Americans push for Smithsonian gallery of their own By JANIE HAR, *Los Angeles Times* May 21, 2019

The Smithsonian's initiative on documenting Asians in America started humbly enough two decades ago, with a borrowed exhibit in a borrowed museum wing and a tiny staff. There was a National Museum of the American Indian attached to the Smithsonian, and progress was being made toward a museum on the National Mall celebrating African Americans' history. But Asian Americans in the 1990s remained a largely invisible population, with few people represented in entertainment, politics, sports or business.

Those years were tough, said Franklin Odo, director at the time of the Smithsonian's Asian Pacific American program. "Whenever we needed to do a public lecture or exhibit, I had to go beg one of these other institutions to lend a space," Odo said. "We had to really convince our colleagues that this was a field, this was a demographic ... that needed to be recognized and needed to be held with some respect." On Saturday, the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center launches a \$25 million fundraising drive for permanent gallery space on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., with a glitzy party in Los Angeles full of celebrities and politicians. Several actors from the hit film "Crazy Rich Asians" are expected to attend, along with Rep. Judy Chu and Rep. Doris Matsui, both Democrats representing California. If successful, an Asian American gallery could join museums and galleries dedicated to other historically underrepresented groups that have staked out space in a national park that is quintessentially American. Millions of people visit the National Mall every year to tour the White House, Lincoln Memorial and the treasures of the Smithsonian. "The ability to have that visibility and recognition is so important," said Lisa Sasaki, the center's director. Despite temporary exhibits along the mall, she said, "there has never been a dedicated space where the public could consistently visit and find out about the history and culture of Asian Americans."

Asian Americans are the nation's fastest-growing minority and number about 20 million, or roughly 6% of the population. They come from more than 20 countries, with the largest populations from China, India, Vietnam, Philippines, Korea and Japan. They range from recent immigrants to descendants of laborers who migrated in the 19th century to build the Transcontinental Railroad and work sugar cane fields in Hawaii. Museum presence is huge, says Laura Lott, president and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums. "Museums preserve what's important to society. They tell our stories, give historical context to contemporary issues and help us imagine a better future," she said.

Odo, the former director, said he had one part-time staffer and no exhibits of his own when the program began in 1997, so he borrowed one from a Los Angeles museum for the program's first installation, about the evolution of field lunches of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. He says the Asian American community has evolved enough as an identity to support a permanent gallery dedicated to their shared experience in America. "I don't know that we have an Oprah," Odo said, referring to Oprah Winfrey's charitable foundation, which donated \$21 million for the National Museum of African American History and Culture. But "we have lots of people with immense means, so there's no question in my mind we can do it."

It's too early to say how large a gallery would be or when it might be secured, but Sasaki says they are looking at several locations along the mall. The 4,500-square-foot (418-square-meter) Molina Family Latino Gallery is scheduled to open in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in 2021. Sasaki says \$25 million is a fundraising goal for phase one of the project. Congressional approval is not required for a gallery within existing space, unlike the stand-alone 400,000-square-foot (37,160-square-meter) National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016. The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center is conscious of showing not just how Asians came to America, but how they have shaped American history. An example is a pin marking a successful 1960s grape boycott led by Mexican American and Filipino American laborers, who chose to band together. "It tells a richer story about California history," said Theodore Gonzalves, a Smithsonian curator. At Saturday's party, the iconic blue dress worn by Constance Wu's character in "Crazy Rich Asians" will be presented as a donation from Marchesa to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. The 2018 Hollywood film was the first in 25 years to feature an all Asian and Asian American cast. Organizers will also honor people and organizations at the gala, including hip-hop artist Jay Park and R&B jazz band Hiroshima.

Supreme Court Won't Stay Alabama Execution after Bitter Clash, Adam Liptak, New York Times, May 30 2019

- 4 WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court on Thursday rejected a request for a stay of execution from an Alabama inmate who said the state's method of execution could subject him to excruciating pain. The court's last encounter with the case, in April, produced an angry clash among the justices that spilled into public view. The vote on Thursday was 5 to 4, with the court's more conservative members in the majority. They offered
- 5 no reasons for denying the stay.

Justice Stephen G. Breyer, writing for the dissenting justices, said the court should have put off the execution of the inmate, Christopher Lee Price, long enough for a federal judge to hold a trial, which had been scheduled to start on June 10, to consider whether the state's execution protocol violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

- 10 On Wednesday, Mr. Price's lawyers urged the Supreme Court to grant a brief delay. "The evidence heavily favors Mr. Price," his lawyers wrote. "The state, however, is desperately seeking to prevent federal judicial review of its lethal injection protocol, hoping that Mr. Price's execution on May 30 will moot his Eighth Amendment claim before the district court is able to issue a ruling on the merits."

- The state's lawyers responded that Mr. Price had raised his claim too late. "Price avoided his April execution date by gamesmanship," they wrote. "His delay tactics should not be rewarded." Mr. Price was executed on
- 15 Thursday night, Gov. Kay Ivey said in a statement.

- Mr. Price and an accomplice were convicted of using a sword and dagger to kill William Lynn, a minister, in 1991 in his home in Bazemore, Ala., while he was preparing Christmas presents for his grandchildren. The pastor's wife, Bessie Lynn, was badly wounded in the attack but survived. Mr. Price admitted to participating
- 20 in robbing the couple but claimed that only his accomplice had harmed them.

- In April, the court allowed Mr. Price's execution to proceed by a 5-to-4 vote. The majority, in a brief, unsigned opinion, said Mr. Price had missed a deadline. Last June, Alabama gave death row inmates 30 days to choose nitrogen hypoxia, which deprives the body of oxygen, as the way they would be executed. Mr. Price did not make the request in time, but he had since done so. The majority said the missed deadline was the end of the
- 25 matter. That opinion prompted an anguished middle-of-the-night dissent from Justice Breyer, whose request that the justices discuss the case the next morning was refused. "To proceed in this way calls into question the basic principles of fairness that should underlie our criminal justice system," Justice Breyer wrote. "To proceed in this matter in the middle of the night without giving all members of the court the opportunity for discussion tomorrow morning is, I believe, unfortunate."

- 30 The dispute among the justices lasted long enough that Alabama officials postponed the execution, and Mr. Price remained on death row. In an unusual after-the-fact opinion issued on May 13, Justice Clarence Thomas, joined by Justices Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Neil M. Gorsuch, wrote to "set the record straight" about why they had voted to let the execution proceed.

- Mr. Price's strategy was to delay the inevitable, Justice Thomas wrote. "It is the same strategy adopted by
- 35 many death-row inmates with an impending execution: bring last-minute claims that will delay the execution, no matter how groundless," Justice Thomas wrote. "The proper response to this maneuvering is to deny meritless requests expeditiously."

- "To the extent the court's failure to issue a timely order was attributable to our own dallying," he wrote, "such delay both rewards gamesmanship and threatens to make last-minute stay applications the norm instead of the
- 40 exception." On Thursday, in a part of the dissent joined only by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Justice Breyer wrote that Mr. Price's case illuminated problems with the death penalty. "This case demonstrates once again," he wrote, "the unfortunate manner in which death sentences are often — perhaps inevitably — carried out in this country. We have here an illustration of why I believe, as I have previously argued, that the court should reconsider the constitutionality of the death penalty in an appropriate case".

Fate of Confederate Monuments Is Stalled by Competing Legal Battles, Alan Blinder and Audra D. S. Burch, New York Times, 20 January 2019

- 1 Randall L. Woodfin, the 37-year-old mayor of Birmingham, Ala., made an unlikely sales pitch the other day after glancing toward some black-and-white photos of his city's segregated past. A 52-foot-tall Confederate monument, a sandstone obelisk erected in 1905 and within sight of City Hall, is available, he said. For free. "Any Confederate museum that wants this thing can have it," Mr. Woodfin said in an interview at City Hall.
- 5 "I'll give it to them right now. Hell, I'm even willing to give them whatever they need to get it to them." But Mr. Woodfin, and the State of Alabama, know such a transfer would not be without political and legal consequences. Almost 154 years after the end of the Civil War, the country is still quarreling — in state capitols and courtrooms, on college campuses and around town squares — over how, or whether, to commemorate the side that lost. Those stubborn debates bubbled up again this month in Winston-Salem and
- 10 Chapel Hill, N.C., and in Birmingham, among the most progressive parts of a region that has struggled to reconcile its history with its modern ambitions.

- "This is one of America's most important conversations. In many ways, we have only begun to talk critically about the landscape that has existed in this country for a very long time that romanticizes the era of the slavery and the role of the Confederacy," said Bryan Stevenson, the leading force behind the newly built National
- 15 Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Ala. Critics of Confederate monuments have won dramatic victories that were almost inconceivable a decade ago: the lowering of the battle flag outside the South Carolina State House, the removals of four towering statues in New Orleans, the renaming of city streets in Atlanta and in Hollywood, Fla. But some states have rushed to shield Confederate tributes from removal. More than 1,700 "publicly sponsored symbols" of the Confederacy remain, according to the Southern Poverty
- 20 Law Center. A new protection proposal, brought by Mike Hill, a Republican state representative in Florida, is pending in the Legislature there. And even as dozens of Confederate statues have been unearthed and hauled away from parks and other public grounds, many others are being quietly discovered. The list of Confederate symbols newly identified or counted now outnumbers the ones that have been removed, a S.P.L.C. study shows. (...)

- 25 Then came the violence in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017, and Mr. Woodfin's predecessor as mayor, William A. Bell Sr., ordered that the base of the towering Confederate monument be shrouded in plywood. The state promptly sued to protect it, and asked that Birmingham be fined \$25,000 a day. Last Monday night, Judge Michael G. Graffeo, of the Circuit Court in Jefferson County, struck down the statute. Under the law, Judge Graffeo wrote, "the people of Birmingham cannot win." "No matter how much they lobby city officials, the
- 30 state has placed a thumb on the scale for a pro-Confederacy message, and the people, acting through their city, will never be able to dissociate themselves from that message entirely," the judge wrote. The judge's order, which the state is expected to appeal, sparked a refreshed furor in Alabama over what should come of monuments. The sponsor of the embattled legislation, Senator Gerald Allen, a Republican from Tuscaloosa County, said in a statement that the law was "meant to thoughtfully preserve the entire story of Alabama's
- 35 history for future generations." And he harshly criticized Judge Graffeo.

- "Judges are not kings, and judicial activism is no substitute for the democratic process," said Mr. Allen, who, in a 2016 interview with The New York Times, argued that it was "important that we tell the story of what has happened in this country because that's what shaped and molded us as a nation." A spokesman for Attorney General Steven T. Marshall, whose office brought the case against Birmingham in August 2017, did
- 40 not respond to a request for comment. Mr. Woodfin, who defeated Mr. Bell within months of the Charlottesville attack and the Alabama lawsuit, is weary of a broader fight that he argued should have been settled long ago. A deepening legal battle with the state, he suggested, was unhelpful and disappointing. "In my mind, this is the opposite of moving forward," he said. "The statue was erected well post-Civil War, in a city that was founded after the Civil War. To me, it seemed like it was intentionally sending a signal to the
- 45 public about revisionist history, and a message to what did exist, even if it was wrong." The monument, which was originally dedicated by a Birmingham area chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, is hardly the only challenge. On Monday, state offices will be closed throughout Alabama. The government will be marking the birthday of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And Robert E. Lee.

Nigel Farage's startup politics: The Brexit Party's company structure makes its leader uniquely powerful in British politics, Tom Mc Tague, Politico, 18 May 2019

▲ Nigel Farage isn't the leader of a political party. He's the CEO, chairman and owner combined. By the beginning of May the Brexit Party was already polling first in the European Parliament election, with the former UKIP chief leading the charge across the country under the banner of democratic "betrayal." But Farage's formal takeover of the Brexit Party did not come until May 9, a week after the local elections, according to official documents lodged with Companies House. It was only then that "The Brexit Party Limited" — the company behind the party that was created in November last year — gave notice that Farage had taken "significant control" of the business, with the right to remove and replace a majority of the board of directors. The company documents reveal a unique structure for a U.K. political party which gives almost total control to its leader, front of shop — and back. The party is set to win the European election popular vote — it is currently polling at 30 percent, according to the latest POLITICO-Hanbury poll — and the highest number of seats, according to POLITICO's poll of polls. The Brexit Party has ambitions far beyond being simply a vehicle for Brexiteer protest votes. It intends to field candidates at every level and develop a full policy platform.

15 There are only two directors of the company — Farage and his friend, the Brexiteer businessman Richard Tice. The company secretary is Phillip Basey, a former UKIP activist, who was appointed in March. And there are five undisclosed shareholders, with each share worth £1. Official government guidance suggests anyone with "significant control" is likely to have more than 25 percent of the company's shares, which in this case, means that Farage owns at least two of the shares. The structure of the Brexit Party and its parent company places Farage in an almost uniquely powerful position in British politics. He is the leader of a party with, 20 Farage says, more than 100,000 "supporters" who have provided the party with £25 and their personal data (name, email, address, phone number and more.) But despite a support base that is close in size to the membership of the ruling Conservative Party, the Brexit Party has no "members" itself, a party spokesperson said — just registered supporters. A prominent Tory donor, Jeremy Hosking, revealed that he was the source behind a £200,000 donation to the Brexit Party, saying he knows of several others who have pledged or given 25 similar amounts.

In the breakneck pace of modern politics, fueled by social media and a 24-hour news culture, Farage has almost complete freedom to drive his movement in any direction he sees fit, free from voting members, executive committees or general secretaries. He is in charge. The Brexit Party leader does not even have any detailed policies or manifesto — other than the central driving force of the movement: to leave the European 30 Union. "Manifesto equals lie," Farage declared earlier this month, vowing never to use the word during the campaign. The Brexit Party's structure is highly unusual in British politics. Theresa May, for example, is answerable to more than 300 MPs, hundreds of Conservative associations and a 1922 committee of backbenchers, which guards the rules that govern leadership challenges. It is they who effectively forced her into promising to stand down after she reintroduces her Brexit withdrawal deal to parliament next month. 35 Jeremy Corbyn is, to some extent, even more bound. He is subject to Labour's national executive committee, with membership drawn from trades unions, activists and affiliated bodies, each with their own interests.

Change UK — the other startup political party vying for public attention — has not given itself the same freedom as Farage. It has only an interim leader, Heidi Allen, who is nominally in charge of its 11 MPs — a collection of ambitious parliamentary figures whose very act of defecting reveals a degree of independence. 40 Intrinsically, it is a harder ship to sail. "We are nimble," said one Brexit Party insider close to Farage. "This is our great advantage. We are able to move quickly, react to what is happening. They [Change UK] just can't, they are trying to do politics by committee — it's their fundamental mistake." A second Brexit Party official added: "We're a startup, that's what we are, and startups have to be able to move quickly to survive."

Farage himself has lauded the freedom the Brexit Party's streamlined setup gives him. In an interview with 45 the Sunday Telegraph, he said he is "running a company, not a political party" adding: "The Chairman Richard Tice and I are not afraid to make decisions." And he suggested that inspiration had come from other populist movements in Europe. "I've watched the growth of the 5Star Movement [in Italy], from its inception, with absolute fascination," he said. "The genius of setting up this new way of doing politics, an online platform."

Are the Humanities History? Michael Manning, *The New York Review of Books*, April 2, 2019

4 Who is going to save the humanities? On all fronts, fields like history and English, philosophy and classical studies, art history and comparative literature are under siege. In 2015, the share of bachelor's degrees awarded in the humanities was down nearly 10 percent from just three years earlier. Almost all disciplines have been affected, but none more so than history. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number
5 of history majors nationwide fell from 34,642 in 2008 to 24,266 in 2017.

Last year, the University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point, facing declining enrollments, announced it was eliminating degrees in History, French, and German. The University of Southern Maine no longer offers degrees in either American and New England Studies or Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures, while the University of Montana has discontinued majors and minors in its Global Humanities and Religions
10 program. Between 2013 and 2016, US colleges cut 651 foreign-language programs.

The primary cause of these developments is the 2008 financial crash, which made students—especially the 70 percent of whom are saddled with debt—ever more preoccupied with their job prospects. With STEM jobs paying so well—the median annual earnings for engineering grads is \$82,000, compared to \$52,000 for humanities grads—enrollments in that area have soared. From 2013 to 2017, the number of undergraduates
15 taking computer science courses nationwide more than doubled. A study of Harvard students from 2008 to 2016 found a dramatic shift from the humanities to STEM. The number majoring in history went from 231 to 136; in English, from 236 to 144; and in art history, from sixty-three to thirty-six, while those studying applied math went from 101 to 279; electrical engineering, from none to thirty-nine; and computer science, from eighty-six to 363. (...)

20 University donors and public officials, hoping to duplicate the success of Stanford and Silicon Valley, are flooding STEM with money. In September 2017, Cornell University opened a \$2 billion tech campus on New York City's Roosevelt Island on twelve acres of land donated by the city, which kicked in an additional \$100 million for the project. Columbia, which in 2010 opened a fourteen-story science center on its Morningside Heights campus, has recently built another, even larger one (designed by Renzo Piano) on its new
25 Manhattanville campus. The City University of New York in September 2014 opened a 206,000-square-foot Advanced Science Research Center dedicated to disciplines like nanoscience, photonics, and neuroscience, while NYU is working closely with the city to transform an abandoned building in downtown Brooklyn into an innovation hub for STEM.

The search for fixes in the tech world should create new openings for humanities graduates. In June 2018, for
30 instance, Google announced a set of seven principles to guide it in developing artificial intelligence, and just last month it unveiled an external advisory board to monitor their application. But the board is top-heavy in computing specialists, and it includes the head of a company that collects and analyzes drone data (as well as the head of the Heritage Foundation). It is, says Mike Ananny, who teaches communication and journalism at the USC Annenberg School, “a fig-leaf exercise”—one that leaves the technologists and engineers in charge.
35 It's not enough for Facebook to hire a few dozen liberal arts grads to monitor its platforms for hate speech, he says; its owners and managers need to address the incentives that encourage people to use its platforms in this way in the first place.

The technologists, Ananny warns, “are not going to willingly give up their power.” In the battle ahead, the crucial players will be those trained in how the humanities, social sciences, and technology intersect—what
40 he calls the “missing middle.” Communications schools and media studies programs are key trainers of such people, teaching the communication skills, analytical capabilities, and critical insights needed to challenge the business model of these companies, especially their drive for traffic and profits. An important new field is STS—science and technology studies—which examines the effects of technology on society. “We have to break out of the tech-first world where engineers lead and we're all left to pick up the pieces and make do,”
45 Ananny says.

In the brave new world that is emerging, the humanities will have a critical part to play—provided that they themselves can adapt to it.

Washington state limits exemptions for measles vaccine, GILLIAN FLACCUS and RACHEL LA CORTE, May 10, 2019, Associated Press News

1 VANCOUVER, Wash. (AP) — Parents in Washington state will no longer be able to claim a personal or philosophical exemption for their children from receiving the combined measles, mumps and rubella vaccine before attending a day care center or school under a measure signed Friday by Gov. Jay Inslee. The state saw more than 70 cases of measles this year, and Inslee signed the bill at Vancouver City Hall, in the county where
5 most of those cases were centered. The new law takes effect at the end of July.

Inslee said that while the bill was an important step in public health, he warned it doesn't do "everything necessary to protect the health of our most vulnerable citizens." "We should be listening to science and medicine, not social media," he said. "It is science and truth that will keep us healthy rather than fear." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported that as of the end of last week, 764 cases of measles
10 have been confirmed in 23 states. Washington is among 17 states that allow some type of non-medical vaccine exemption for personal or philosophical beliefs. In addition, medical and religious exemptions exist for attendance at the state's public or private schools or licensed day-care centers. Medical and religious exemptions remain in place under the measure passed by the Legislature last month.

Unless an exemption is claimed, children are required to be vaccinated against or show proof of acquired
15 immunity for nearly a dozen diseases — including polio, whooping cough and measles — before they can attend school or go to child care centers. The state Department of Health said that 4% of Washington K-12 students have non-medical vaccine exemptions. Of those, 3.7% of the exemptions are personal, and the rest are religious. While the Senate had first sought a bill that would have removed the philosophical exemption for all required childhood vaccines, both chambers ultimately agreed to move forward with the House bill that
20 focused only on the measles, mumps, rubella vaccine — also known as MMR.

Parents opposed to the measures packed public hearings and the Washington state Capitol regularly with their children throughout the legislative session, which ended April 28. More than 30 parents, carrying signs that included slogans such as "Science is Never Settled," arrived outside City Hall ahead of Friday's bill signing. Christie Nadzieja, of Vancouver, Washington, was one of three protesters inside during the ceremony who
25 stood up and turned their backs to Inslee as he signed the bill. "I'm for medical freedom and vaccine choice," said Nadzieja, who also livestreamed the signing on her cellphone. Other parents were accompanied by their young children.

"We're just asking for the parental right to choose whether or not our children are vaccinated. We're not here to take away anybody else's right, whether they choose to vaccinate or not," said Kari Palomo, a parent from
30 Vancouver, Washington. Before mass vaccination, 400 to 500 people in the U.S. died of the measles every year. Serious complications include brain swelling that can cause blindness or deafness and pneumonia. Early symptoms include a fever, runny nose and malaise, followed by a rash that starts around the head and moves down the body. Patients are contagious four days before and four days after getting the rash.

Nine out of 10 unvaccinated people who are exposed will get the disease. Someone who has no immunity can
35 get sick up to three weeks after they have been exposed to the virus. There was a surge in the anti-vaccine movement after a study in the late 1990s alleged a link between the measles vaccine and the rise of autism. The study has since been discredited and the researcher lost his medical license, but misinformation and fear persists. California removed non-medical exemptions for all vaccines required for both public and private schools in 2015 after a measles outbreak at Disneyland sickened 147 people and spread across the U.S. and
40 into Canada. Vermont abandoned its personal exemption in 2015. Several other states are considering similar legislation, including Maine, Connecticut and neighboring Oregon, which saw a handful of cases tied to the Washington state outbreak. In Clark County, Washington, the site of the recent measles outbreak, 15 of the 54 locations where people were exposed to the viral illness were at schools, said Alan Melnick, the county's public health director. Eleven people got measles due to exposure school, he added, and 800 children were
45 banned from school because they hadn't been vaccinated or their vaccination status wasn't clear. "Getting the vaccination rates up at schools is really essential in terms of protecting kids," Melnick said.

Opinion - The Malign Incompetence of the British Ruling Class

By Pankaj Mishra, *The New York Times*, 17 January 2019

5 Describing Britain's calamitous exit from its Indian empire in 1947, the novelist Paul Scott wrote that in India the British "came to the end of themselves as they were" — that is, to the end of their exalted idea about themselves. Scott was among those shocked by how hastily and ruthlessly the British, who had ruled India for more than a century, condemned it to fragmentation and anarchy; how Louis Mountbatten, accurately described by the right-wing historian Andrew Roberts as a "mendacious, intellectually limited hustler," came to preside, as the last British viceroy of India, over the destiny of some 400 million people.

10 Britain's rupture with the European Union is proving to be another act of moral dereliction by the country's rulers. The Brexiteers, pursuing a fantasy of imperial-era strength and self-sufficiency, have repeatedly revealed their hubris, mulishness and ineptitude over the past two years. Though originally a "Remainer," Prime Minister Theresa May has matched their arrogant obduracy, imposing a patently unworkable timetable of two years on Brexit and laying down red lines that undermined negotiations with Brussels and doomed her deal to resoundingly bipartisan rejection this week in Parliament.

15 Such a pattern of egotistic and destructive behavior by the British elite flabbergasts many people today. But it was already manifest seven decades ago during Britain's rash exit from India. Mountbatten, derided as "Master of Disaster" in British naval circles, was a representative member of a small group of upper- and middle-class British men from which the imperial masters of Asia and Africa were recruited. Abysmally equipped for their immense responsibilities, they were nevertheless allowed by Britain's brute imperial power to blunder through the world — a "world of whose richness and subtlety," as E.M. Forster wrote in "Notes on the English Character," they could "have no conception." Forster blamed Britain's political fiascos on its privately educated men, callow beneficiaries of the country's elitist public school system. These eternal schoolboys whose "weight is out of all proportion" to their numbers are certainly overrepresented among Tories. They have today plunged Britain into its worst crisis, exposing its incestuous and self-serving ruling class like never before.

20 From David Cameron, who recklessly gambled his country's future on a referendum in order to isolate some whingers in his Conservative Party, to the opportunistic Boris Johnson, who jumped on the Brexit bandwagon to secure the prime ministerial chair once warmed by his role model Winston Churchill, and the top-hatted, theatrically retro Jacob Rees-Mogg, whose fund management company has set up an office within the European Union even as he vehemently scorns it, the British political class has offered to the world an astounding spectacle of mendacious, intellectually limited hustlers. Even a columnist for *The Economist*, an organ of the British elite, now professes dismay over "Oxford chums" who coast through life on "bluff rather than expertise." "Britain," the magazine belatedly lamented last month, "is governed by a self-involved clique that rewards group membership above competence and self-confidence above expertise." In Brexit, the British "chumocracy," the column declared, "has finally met its Waterloo."

25 It is actually more accurate, for those invoking British history, to say that partition — the British Empire's ruinous exit strategy — has come home. In a grotesque irony, borders imposed in 1921 on Ireland, England's first colony, have proved to be the biggest stumbling block for the English Brexiteers chasing imperial virility. Moreover, Britain itself faces the prospect of partition if Brexit, a primarily English demand, is achieved and Scottish nationalists renew their call for independence.

30 It is a measure of English Brexiteers' political acumen that they were initially oblivious to the volatile Irish question and contemptuous of the Scottish one. Ireland was cynically partitioned to ensure that Protestant settlers outnumber native Catholics in one part of the country. The division provoked decades of violence and consumed thousands of lives. It was partly healed in 1998, when a peace agreement removed the need for security checks along the British-imposed partition line. The re-imposition of a customs and immigration regime along Britain's only land border with the European Union was always likely to be resisted with violence. But Brexiteers, awakening late to this ominous possibility, have tried to deny it. A leaked recording revealed Mr. Johnson scorning concerns about the border as "pure millennium bug stuff."

35 Politicians and journalists in Ireland are understandably aghast over the aggressive ignorance of English Brexiteers. Businesspeople everywhere are outraged by their cavalier disregard for the economic consequences of new borders. But none of this would surprise anyone who knows of the unconscionable breeziness with which the British ruling class first drew lines through Asia and Africa and then doomed the people living across them to endless suffering.

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Cambridge's slavery inquiry will raise more questions than it answers

David Butterfield, The Spectator, 1 May 2019

Can the past hold the present to ransom? Can we be culpable for our predecessors' actions? Knotty questions of this kind have long been debated in British universities. But now these abstractions are finding new and controversial expression. Yesterday, the University of Cambridge made headlines by launching an academic investigation into its historical relationship – direct or otherwise – with the slave trade. The panel will spend two years scrutinising whether Cambridge profited from 'the Atlantic slave trade and other forms of coerced labour during the colonial era'. For academics, the enquiry will certainly be interesting. But serious problems inevitably arise when historical discoveries are deemed to have moral consequence for the present.

First things first: there's no need for suspense here. Cambridge will certainly have profited indirectly from exploitative labour, not only through the slave trade but all manner of indentured and convict labour. This profit will be unearthed in the considerable donations from those benefactors who made their fortune exploiting others. What's more, an 800-year-old university will be found to parallel the moral failings of the nation with which it has been so intimately connected, as a conduit and bastion of institutional power. Cambridge is not alone in asking these questions. Last year, the University of Glasgow concluded its own enquiry on the same grim topic. While it had not directly participated in slavery, philanthropic gifts of an incalculable value had originated from donors engaged in the slave trade. Faced with this evidence, the university published its own 'programme of reparative justice', which involved the founding of a centre for slavery studies, the renaming of buildings and a commitment to diversifying the racial profile of students and staff. The Vice Chancellor of Cambridge, Stephen Toope, has said he is 'very struck' by these approaches. As a university, Cambridge has long condemned the evil of treating humans as a commodity for enslavement and sale, whether practised by European, African, Arab or anyone. In the late eighteenth century it was instrumental in securing change: William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson, two driving forces of the abolition movement, were contemporaries at St John's College. Sixty years later, in 1849, Queens' College hosted Alexander Crummell, the University's first black undergraduate, while slavery still blighted his native America.

My colleagues undertaking this investigation will be well aware of all this. But their work may simply prompt the University to survey its other past injustices, which extend far beyond slavery. For much of its history, entrance for foreign-born students was difficult and for those who renounced Anglicanism, effectively impossible. Those researching female undergraduates will come up entirely empty-handed before the year 1869; and for the subsequent eighty years, no woman was allowed to take a degree. [...]

The racism of our institutional forebears is a stain on our collective past but that does not obviously taint the present. What comes from leapfrogging centuries of steady progress to lambast an original iniquity? What role should reparations play when history has found ways to repair itself? Across the Atlantic, talk of reparations for slavery is particularly charged, not just on American campuses but in the race of Democratic presidential candidates. But, each time rebalancing programmes are talked through, a fundamental worry emerges: how could any such scheme operate without reinvoking the explicitly race-based genealogical obsessions of the very system that motivated reparation?

In its mission statement, Cambridge sees the investigation as one of several 'race equality initiatives'. But it's already facing charges of tokenism. While some see the enterprise as self-flagellating guilt-letting, or even virtue-signalling wokery, others think it half-baked to leave unexplored the 31 colleges that form the lifeblood of the University. Others perhaps may prefer to see greater energy from Cambridge in working to help end modern-day slavery, still supported by states and private institutions worldwide. Cambridge's contribution in science, the arts, economics, politics, technology and the law remains unfathomably and undeniably rich. And reassuringly, intellectual excellence from fresh quarters has often exposed the university's unjust behaviour. In 1869, Numa Hartog, a Jewish undergraduate, topped the Mathematics Tripos as Senior Wrangler, forcing Cambridge to abolish its religious restrictions two years later. In 1887, when Agnata Ramsay took the top First in Classics, the shock that shook the nation helped advance women's education. As a member of the University for the last fifteen years, I see this process of evolution is still in evidence. In 2019, Cambridge is rightly striving harder than ever to accept students of the highest intellectual potential, regardless of background and circumstances. While this activity has no regard for the injustices of centuries past, it properly acknowledges the iniquities of the present, factoring into its decisions all the challenges' raised by educational and socioeconomic disadvantage. There's a passionately-held conviction that this will secure an appropriately representative student body. And – for the time being, thankfully – no concern is given to a time when the question will doubtless arise: what reparations should be made to society for the University's unashamed elitism in privileging intellectual excellence above all else?

Dr David Butterfield is director of studies for Classics at Queens' College

Why Brexiteers forgot about the Border

Oliver Norgrove, *The Irish Times*, March 20 2019

The Brexit looming before the UK today looks nothing like the Brexit promised in 2016. The goalposts have shifted, negotiations have been arduous and the biting realities of trade have crept up on Britain's lawmakers. In truth, there is now as strong an argument for revoking article 50 as there is for continuing down the path laid out by Theresa May's withdrawal agreement.

As a former Brexit campaigner, I find much to reflect on. I take the view that central to the unravelling of Brexit has been the Irish Border, whose frictionless state is informally tied to the ambitions and objectives of the 1998 Belfast Agreement. Those of us who made the case for leaving the European Union did not sufficiently take into account the interests of Northern Ireland, nor indeed did we estimate the significance of the role played by the Border within the Brexit negotiations.

As historical errors go, this is pretty large. And an error it most definitely was. An argument is often presented by Remainers that the Leaver exclusion of Northern Ireland from Brexit discussion before and during the referendum was a deliberate, strategic decision. I do not buy this. I think the omission of Northern Ireland from Leaver thinking was far less conscious and, in some ways, symptomatic of a much wider political issue.

One reason remains that until two years ago, British people, activists and politicians simply did not need to think or know very much about the workings of international trade. European Union membership had for years meant that trade policy was outsourced to Brussels, with little thinking behind moulding it in Westminster. The intellectual atrophy born out of this will have had a major impact on pre-referendum thinking, and certainly any need for extensive consideration of customs and third-country controls.

Another reason might well have been down to the fact that in Britain, political discourse routinely ignores Northern Irish interests. Being that it is geographically, historically and constitutionally separate from England, Scotland and Wales, there is a tendency to treat Northern Ireland as a sort of unwanted child, with rare mentions of Northern Irish public policy usually raised as a sort of marker for comparison with Britain rather than as part of wider discussions of reform.

Newsworthy events which take place in Northern Ireland are seldom covered in Britain, for one reason or another. Some of the worst poverty in the UK, for instance, happens to be located in Northern Ireland, where it is left undiscussed and untouched. Debate surrounding improving infrastructure and transport systems in British parliamentary and policy circles typically focuses on London, with occasional mentions of the home counties. It never addresses the drastic need for investment in Northern Ireland.

On a psychological level, such exclusion probably filtered down into the minds of quite a lot of ordinary voters leading up to the referendum. It certainly did mine, being that one of my huge failings of the past three years was to simply not think about the impact of the Border on the merits of leaving the EU. Of this I am immensely disappointed and rather ashamed. What started out as a topic almost never discussed, and when mentioned dismissed, eventually became the cornerstone of the agreement eventually shaping Brexit policy.

Some months before the referendum, I spent time horseshoeing my way round the south, east and west coastline of England taking part in street activism and getting a feel of public opinion. I do not remember the Border coming up once in conversation with the people I spoke to. Typifying the British political attitude towards Northern Ireland, so absent was the issue that it could not have been anything other than honest ignorance based on learned exclusion.

Inside Vote Leave, too, a very similar observation could be made. The Border not only played no part in campaign messaging being that it was largely technical and thus not very politically sellable, it was also seldom mentioned in the office. This I pointed out not as an attack upon anybody (indeed, my own ignorance is partly to blame), but in order to capture the extent to which the Border just did not feature in Leaver thinking and discourse.

One night, I want to say sometime around the end of May 2016, BBC Newsnight – to be hosted by James O'Brien that evening – rang us at Westminster Tower to ask for a representative to go on that night to debate the effects of Brexit on the Border. Nobody in the office was keen to take up the request, with even our more polished and experienced media performers rejecting the opportunity on the grounds that they simply lacked real knowledge of the issue.

I remember quite vividly the feeling of unease and discomfort about the prospect of us talking about something we just didn't feel needed addressing. Of course, I would not have been much use myself, given that the most thought I had afforded the topic was simply to dismiss any suggestion that the North-South peace process would be halted as yet more Project Fear. I now realise this was naivety on my part. I should have considered things more carefully.

And so we are where we are. The big Brexit dream was brought to its knees thanks to one of the UK's most persisting political ailments: its tendency to ignore the interests of Northern Ireland. Historical accounts of the future will do well to emphasise this somewhat uncomfortable fact.

When We Talk About Abortion, Let's Talk About Men, by Michelle Oberman and W. David Ball, *The New York Times*, June 2nd, 2019.

Abortion opponents won major victories last week when Louisiana lawmakers voted to ban abortions as early as six weeks into a woman's pregnancy and the Supreme Court upheld an Indiana law requiring the burial of fetal remains in *Box v. Planned Parenthood of Indiana and Kentucky Inc.* So what happens if *Roe v. Wade* falls?

5 Abortion won't disappear. Our research shows that countries where abortion is illegal have higher rates of abortion than in the United States — figures which are largely a function of unwanted pregnancies. Nearly half of all pregnancies here are unintended, of which four in 10 end in abortion.

10 But it takes two to make an unwanted pregnancy. That's why we need to talk about men when we talk about abortion. The last time we included men in the discussion was 1992, when the Supreme Court wisely overturned Pennsylvania's law requiring a woman seeking an abortion to prove she had first notified her husband. That's right — attempting to give men veto power over women was the only meaningful effort to include men in abortion regulation.

15 Our entire abortion debate pits the fetus against the woman. Men are absent. They can shrug off an unwanted pregnancy as someone else's problem, even though they contributed half the genetic material to the fetus. Most men probably won't think the abortion bans littering statehouses have anything to do with them. They are both wrong and right. It would be easy to apply these laws to men, to punish them in the ways we have long punished women. But we also know that's not going to happen.

Alabama's abortion ban, for example, exempts women from criminal punishment. But if the Supreme Court allows the law to stand, and all abortions become illegal, a man could easily be prosecuted.

20 Here's how. Say John and Jane have gotten pregnant, and they want to end the pregnancy. This is a common scenario, as ethics professor Katie Watson has found. Nearly nine in 10 unwanted pregnancies happen in relationships, and most abortion patients say their male partners support their decision.

If John buys abortion drugs online, or even encourages Jane to, then he could serve from 10 to 99 years in prison for aiding her. This happened in 2014 to a Pennsylvania mother, imprisoned for buying her teenage daughter abortion drugs.

25 Things get worse for John when you consider that Alabama, along with other states that have passed embryonic heartbeat laws, grants personhood to fetuses as early as two weeks after a missed period.

If a fetus is a child, then John is a parent.

30 John can't abandon his child and is legally obligated to protect it. Current law gives Jane the exclusive right to decide whether to end her pregnancy. But if abortion is a crime, John's obligations to the fetus may shift. If John walks away, knowing he got her pregnant and suspecting she will have an abortion, he may be committing child neglect. Or worse — mothers have been found guilty of murder for having failed to prevent their partners from fatally abusing their children. It's not clear what John is supposed to do. Nor is it clear whether John can avoid liability.

35 John may even have broken Alabama law before Jane got pregnant, by failing to take precautions to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Like most states, Alabama law criminalizes recklessly engaging in "conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury to another person." When John ejaculated inside Jane without knowing whether she wanted a baby, he arguably showed a conscious disregard for the risks caused by pregnancy, whether from childbearing or abortion.

40 We know these prosecutions sound absurd. Indeed, we think they are a terrible idea. Prosecution won't deter men from having unprotected sex. And the threat of any abortion-related prosecution already jeopardizes pregnant women's lives, which is why the American Medical Association, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology and many states oppose prosecuting those who end their own pregnancies. Prosecuting men would intensify those risks: if John is angry or panicked about his own legal jeopardy, he might threaten or hurt Jane to force her not to abort.

And surely the last thing we need is another way to fill the nation's prisons with men — especially since, as so often happens, punitive laws are disproportionately enforced against low-income people and people of color.

45 Maybe Alabama prosecutors will head to the white fraternities in Tuscaloosa and begin to arrest young men for conspiring to recklessly endanger the lives of the partygoers they hope to have unprotected sex with. But we doubt it. Think about it, though. The novelty of prosecuting men for abortion tells us something important about the way we have, until now, framed the debate. Boys will be boys, but women who get pregnant have behaved irresponsibly.

50 We are so comfortable with regulating women's sexual behavior, but we're shocked by the idea of doing it to men. Though it might seem strange to talk about men and abortion, it's stranger not to, since women don't have unwanted pregnancies without them.

All men, whether leaders, legislators or just regular guys, should know that abortion is personal for them, too. They shouldn't just speak to and about women. They must take responsibility for themselves.

Marching has returned as a force in British politics

From Leavers and Remainers to the far left and far right, crowds are throwing their weight around again

Bagehot, *The Economist*, March 21st 2019

The great achievement of parliamentary democracy is to take politics off the streets. In the 18th and early 19th centuries Britain was a land of people on the march. Mobs rioted against papists and gin taxes. Protesters marched in favour of repealing the Corn Laws and extending the voting franchise. The arrival of full democracy in 1928 changed the tone of politics. Big demonstrations were few and far between. Industrial conflicts alienated the public. Professional protesters, carrying their bedraggled banners from one tiny meeting to another, became figures of fun.

Today the crowd is re-emerging as a force in politics. Parliament Square is permanently occupied by rival armies of pro- and anti-Brexit protesters. The Labour Party's leaders have spent most of their lives on "demos". A gaggle of Brexit supporters has begun a "March to Leave", from Sunderland to London. The People's Vote campaign expects that on March 23rd hundreds of thousands of people will march in favour of "putting it to the people", its second giant demonstration in five months.

Things began to change in Tony Blair's second term. In 2002 over 400,000 people, many of them country squires, protested against a ban on fox hunting. A year later 750,000 marched against the Iraq war. These demonstrations were driven in part by strong feelings about polarising issues, but also by a sense that politics had been taken over by a professional political class. The return of marching came at a time when formal participation in the political process had reached its nadir. In 2001 voter turnout reached its lowest level since the beginning of universal suffrage, at 59.4%. Party membership was a fraction of what it had been in the 1950s and 1960s.

More recently the return of protests has been supercharged by three things. Brexit is the gift that keeps on giving when it comes to getting people riled up and on the streets. The decision to hold a referendum unleashed a volatile force: the "will of the people" (based on a single vote), which supposedly trumps the considered judgment of elected MPs. The vote was sufficiently close for Remainers to dream of reversing it if they shouted loud enough, and sufficiently decisive for Leavers to feel affronted at the thought of a re-vote. Theresa May's serial bungling has heightened every possible contradiction between representative and direct democracy.

The second is the rise of Jeremy Corbyn. The far left has always been contemptuous of "bourgeois democracy". For them the great debate is whether simply to ignore Parliament ("If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal") or whether to treat it as just one front in the broader struggle. The Corbynites have taken the second route. They want to shift the locus of power from Parliament to broader society. In 2013 John McDonnell, now the shadow chancellor, proclaimed that "Parliamentary democracy doesn't work for us, elections aren't working for us" and advocated co-ordinated action with trade unions and community organisations to bring the government down. Corbynites also want to reduce MPs from representatives to mere delegates, who have to implement the will of the people (i.e., the will of activists). If he ever wins power, Mr Corbyn will lead something new in British politics: a government committed to advancing its agenda not primarily in Parliament but in society at large, through co-ordinated strikes, agitation and general botheration.

The third is the rise of social media. In "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind" (1895), Gustave Le Bon accused crowds of "impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of sentiments" and, above all, debasing the normally civilised citizen: "isolated, he may be a cultivator individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian." This might sound a little overwrought when applied, say, to the People's Vote, where the biggest post-march agitation is about whether to decamp to Itsu or Wagamama. But it applies perfectly to the virtual crowds online. The internet not only allows the likes of Tommy Robinson to reach millions of people, it also persuades otherwise civilised folk to adopt mob behaviour, bombarding their enemies with vituperative messages and embracing ever more extreme views. It would be unwise to bet that such vituperation once normalised, will remain confined to the virtual world. [...]

Parliament has not acquitted itself well in the past few weeks. Ministers have accused the Speaker of bias, MPs have engaged in shouting matches and secretaries of state have voted against their own government. Yet at this low moment in Westminster's history, it is worth remembering what a glorious role Parliament has played in replacing the politics of agitation with the politics of discussion and deliberation. A few protests every now and again can enhance democracy. But for the most part politics belongs in the debating chamber, not on the streets.

The unspoken violence of Donald Trump's border wall, by Nour Halabi, *The Conversation*, March 20th, 2019.

Ever since his days on the election campaign trail the US president, Donald Trump, has assured voters of his intentions to build a wall along the US border with Mexico. He reiterated this promise during the 2019 State of the Union, and then declared a state of emergency soon after in order to access funding that Congress had rejected. It is now included on Trump's 2020 re-election campaign website as part of a broader agenda to curb immigration.

Opponents of Trump's border wall have dismissed the project as politically self-serving and financially frivolous. But arguments against the border wall have primarily focused on the cost to US taxpayers, suggesting economics as the most compelling framework through which a border wall project could be shot down.

Some others have focused on the environmental impact a border wall might have on the habitats and migration flows of North American wildlife.

It seems that many have avoided discussions of the moral issues raised by the border project and its long-lasting consequences for human civilisation. By contrast, Trump doesn't rely on fiscal responsibility to justify his project, stressing his administration's "moral duty to create an immigration system that protects the lives and jobs of [...] citizens."

But it is the moral costs of the border wall that should raise the greatest concern for the world at large. In my study on the lasting impact of border walls on society, I examined centuries of history and politics to uncover the consequences of the ancient walls surrounding Damascus on present-day Syrian society.

Those Roman walls, built around the 3rd century AD were intended to protect the city and its inhabitants from invaders. They surrounded the city, allowing inhabitants to enter and exit at seven points, the famous seven gates of Damascus. In 749 AD, Abu Abbas al-Saffah destroyed the walls during his overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate, leaving only a small portion that extended from the Bab Touma gate to the Bab al Salam gate.

Today, long after they were destroyed, the Roman walls continue to have an effect on the structure of Syrian society, dictating marriages, business networks, and many other elements of socio-economic status. There are websites which list the family names of notables who historically resided "within" the city walls, bestowing an enduring distinction on generations of Syrians born with last names like the one my mother bore.

These contemporary practices suggest that the Roman walls continue to divide society along the lines of "Jouwwa" (inside) and "Barra" (outside), discriminating against those who live beyond their boundaries as "other".

In a recent book chapter, I argue that walls act as communication devices that symbolise belonging or otherness to the communities that reside within and outside their bounds. As the archaeologist Oliver Creighton has commented:

The image of the walled city might outwardly be one of enclosure, cohesion, and privilege, equally important but underestimated is the enduring role of walled heritage in excluding [...] populations.

Walls communicate protection and social cohesion to those living inside their bounds. They also symbolise a community's "worthiness" of protection. By contrast, people beyond their bounds are deemed unworthy of protection. More importantly, they become a dehumanised part of the landscape that the internal "we" must be protected from.

This distinction was apparent when Trump stated that his administration was intent on ending "illegal immigration and putting the ruthless coyotes, cartels, drug dealers and human traffickers out of business."

Most alarmingly, the dehumanisation of populations outside the boundaries of walls threatens violence towards these communities. It also impedes their movement into the centre, criminalising their mobility. As such, the plans to build a border wall – and the global proliferation of walls including between India and Bangladesh, and on the Hungarian border – suggests an ever-increasing militarisation of border crossing and mobility, with lethal consequences for migrants across the globe.

As legal expert Jaya Ramji-Nogales has said of global migration regimes, the world needs "alternate approach to global migration law". This must begin by using evidence to challenge the escalating militarisation of border crossings in order to advocate for mobility as a fundamental human right that should not be curtailed by walls or borders.

It is telling that we acknowledge migration as a necessary part of life for most organisms on earth. Zoologists and conservationists trace the migration patterns of different land animals, birds and fish. Yet the approach to discussions on global migration flows fails to seriously consider migration as crucial to human civilisation. That needs to change.

It isn't Trump who's a big baby – it's Sadiq

Brendan O'Neill, *Spiked Online*, 4th June 2019

Sadiq Khan's insults against Trump were historically illiterate and dangerously coarse.

If you want to see just how entitled and arrogant Britain's chattering classes have become, look no further than their indignation over Donald Trump's tweets calling London mayor Sadiq Khan a 'stone cold loser' and mocking his diminutive stature. Trump posted his Sadiqphobic tweets (I'm amazed the PC set hasn't started using the word 'Sadiqphobia' yet) as Air Force One was readying to land in London.

The tweets were an outrage against morality, decency, diplomacy and the United Kingdom itself, the hissy-fit-havers insist. 'How dare Trump attack the lovely, progressive Sadiq?', they cry in unison, as they accuse the orange oaf they love to loathe of demeaning the office of the president, weakening the special relationship, and coarsening public discourse.

There's only one problem with their self-satisfied flapping over Trump's online namecalling – Sadiq started it! He was the first name-caller in this ridiculous, teenage Twitterspat. He likened Trump to fascists. In a national newspaper. On Sunday, the day before Trump came to the UK. Sadiq's crystal-clear intention was to cause a diplomatic stink and start a virtual scrap that might win him some brownie points in the interminable battle over who will get to animate the corpse of the Labour Party once Jeremy Corbyn vacates this macabre office. And anyone who has ever braved a rowdy playground, had a lively night out or even just had a normal job will know that you can't go around dishing out insults without getting a bit of blowback. Where the hell did these people grow up?

The UK media depicts Trump as a big baby. (When they're not depicting him as literally Hitler, that is. How telling that they can't decide if he's an overgrown child or the reincarnation of the most evil man in human history.) That Trump baby blimp will fly over London today, as part of the anti-Trump protests, with the official blessing of Sadiq Khan, of course. But in this spat, it isn't Trump who's behaving like a baby – it's Sadiq.

Sadiq has done the equivalent of starting a playground scrap and then running to teacher to say 'Miss, he called me a name!' when the person he picked a scrap with fired insults back at him. It's pathetic. What Sadiq said about Trump in the *Observer* – that his actions are like those of the 'European dictators of the 1930s and 40s' and that he is the figurehead of a 'global far-right movement' that is 'using the same divisive tropes of the fascists of the 20th century' – is far worse than what Trump said about Sadiq in return. Sadiq likened Trump to the people who destroyed Europe and murdered and gassed to death millions of Jews; Trump called Sadiq a midget. I'm saying Sadiq got off very lightly here.

It is testament to the utter devaluation of the word 'fascist', to the way it has been reduced to a meaningless everyday insult, that the Twitterati and media elite were fine with Sadiq calling Trump a fascist but then completely lost the plot when Trump said Sadiq is a loser who is not very tall. This is one of the key problems with the Trump-bashing of the political, media and middle classes – the way it has appropriated the horrors and the language of history in order to add some oomph to these people's disdain for Trump. Because in the process of plundering the barbarism of the 1930s and 1940s for words and imagery to use against a 21st-century president they don't like, these people demean history itself and relativise what happened in those darkest moments in human history.

They think they are getting one over on Trump, but in truth they are getting one over on the victims of fascism and on the importance of recognising the unique nature of the Nazis' industrial destruction of European Jewry. In constantly citing the 1930s in their spluttering attacks on Trump, they render that decade mundane, routine, just a 'bad patch' in human history, like the bad patch we are allegedly experiencing today under Trump and other populist leaders. They unwittingly contribute to a sense that maybe 1930s Europe wasn't that bad. In comparing fascist Europe to Trump's America, they don't so much insult Trump's America as they do soften and even excuse the staggering, unprecedented crisis of humanity that occurred in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe.

The terrible irony is that they themselves contribute to a culture of prejudice. Holocaust relativism – the idea that Jewish suffering wasn't all that bad so maybe we should stop going on about it – is one of the key drivers of the new, identitarian breed of anti-Semitism. In inflaming Holocaust relativism, these people certainly do nothing to challenge the new anti-Semitism, and they may even be accidentally energising it. Their overuse of the words fascism and Nazi and Hitler and genocide is not only historically illiterate – it is politically dangerous. Sadiq's words have done far more to coarsen politics and society than Trump's response did.

America's public schools seldom bring rich and poor together – and MLK would disapprove by Jack Schneider, *The Conversation*, January 18th, 2019.

America's public schools were meant to bring together children from all walks of life.

Five decades after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., many carry on his legacy through the struggle for racially integrated schools. Yet as King put it in a 1968 speech, the deeper struggle was “for genuine equality, which means economic equality.” Justice in education would demand not just racially integrated schools, but also economically integrated schools.

The fight for racial integration meant overturning state laws and a century of history – it was an uphill battle from the start. But economic integration should have been easier.

Early advocates of taxpayer-supported common schools argued that public education would promote integration across social classes. They thought it would instill a spirit of shared community and open what Horace Mann called “a wider area over which the social feelings will expand.”

And, generally speaking, it worked. The ultra-rich mostly continued to send their children to private academies. But many middle- and upper-income households began to send their children to public schools. As historians have shown, economically segregated schools did not systematically emerge until the mid-20th century, as a product of exclusionary zoning and discriminatory housing policies. Schools weren't perfectly integrated by any means, particularly with regard to race. They were, however, vital sites of cross-class interaction.

Many prominent Americans – including U.S. presidents – were products of the public schools. Commonly, they sat side by side in classrooms with people from different walks of life.

But over the past half-century, students have been increasingly likely to go to school with students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Since 1970, residential segregation has increased sharply, with twice as many families now living in either rich or poor neighborhoods – a trend that has been particularly acute in urban areas. And segregation by income is most extreme among families with school-age children. Poor children are increasingly likely to go to school with poor children. Similar economic isolation is true of the middle and affluent classes.

Contemporary Americans commonly accept that their schools will be segregated by social class. Yet the architects of American public education would have viewed such an outcome as a catastrophe. In fact, they might attribute growing economic inequality to the systematic separation of rich and poor. As Horace Mann argued, it was the core mission of public schools to bring different young people together – to consider not just “what one individual or family needs,” but rather “what the whole community needs.”

Many parents do continue to seek out diverse schools. A number of school districts have worked to devise student assignment plans that advance the aim of integration. And some charter schools are reaching this market by pursuing what has been called a “diverse-by-design” strategy. As demonstrated by research, diverse schools can and often do improve achievement across a range of social and cognitive outcomes, such as critical thinking, empathy and open-mindedness.

Largely overlooked, however, has been the political benefit of integrated schools. One rarely encounters the once-common argument that the health of American democracy depends on rich and poor attending school together. This is particularly surprising in an age of tremendous disparities in wealth and power. Members of Congress, on average, are 12 times wealthier than the typical American. Moreover, lawmakers are increasingly responsive to the privileged, even at the expense of middle-class voters.

If elites are isolated from their lower- and middle-income peers, they may be less likely to see a relationship of mutual commitment and responsibility to those of lesser means. As scholars Kendra Bischoff and Sean F. Reardon have argued, “If socioeconomic segregation means that more advantaged families do not share social environments and public institutions such as schools, public services, and parks with low-income families, advantaged families may hold back their support for investments in shared resources.”

Today more than 100 school districts or charter school chains work to integrate schools economically. Cambridge, Massachusetts, for instance, has four decades of experience balancing enrollments by social class, seeking to match the diversity of the city as a whole in each school.

This, of course, is only possible in a diverse place. Median family income in Cambridge is roughly US\$100,000, while 15 percent of city residents live below the poverty line. It is also made possible through heavy investments in public education in the city. After all, it is far easier to convince middle-class and affluent parents to send their children to the public schools when per-pupil expenditures rival the highest-spending suburbs, as they do in Cambridge.

But not every district has Cambridge's advantages. Nor does every district have similar political will.

The latter of those two constraints, however, may soon begin to change. Faced with a growing divide between rich and poor, Americans may begin to demand schools that not only serve young people equally from a funding standpoint, but also educate them together in the same classrooms.

Common schools by themselves are not enough to solve the problem of economic inequality. Yet if Americans seek to create a society in which the rich and the poor see themselves in common cause, common schools may be a necessary – and long overdue – step. We must come to see, in the words of Martin Luther King, that, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

Low pay, large classes, funding cuts: behind new wave of US teachers' strikes, by Michael Sainato, *The Guardian*, February 27th 2019.

Low pay, oversized classrooms, underfunding, old textbooks, a lack of support staff and high teacher turnover rates. These are a few of the reasons teachers across the United States cite as motivations behind a fresh wave of teacher strikes this year, restarting a phenomenon that provided a massive boost to the US labor movement in 2018.

5 So far in 2019 strikes have broken out in Los Angeles and Oakland in California, Denver in Colorado and in Virginia and West Virginia, notching up notable wins in terms of pay raises and better working conditions.

10 The fresh push on strikes has come despite a June 2018 supreme court ruling in the Janus case that held non-union members in the public sector do not have to pay union fees. The decision was seen as a serious blow to unions but teacher unions, at least, have avoided massive membership and funding losses and instead continued a nationwide burst of recruiting, organizing and successful strike actions.

For Tania Kappier, a history teacher at Oakland Technical high school and board member of a teachers union in Oakland, the motivations for taking action are simple and at the core of their job.

“Our work conditions are the students’ education conditions. We’re doing the best we can at an impossible job and that’s not OK for our students and it’s not OK for our own dignity,” Kappier said.

15 Kappier explained classrooms in Oakland’s school district are too large, her history textbooks are outdated, schools in the district don’t have nurses, adequate staffing of counselors, no librarians, and music and art programs are non-existent at some schools in the district. She also noted teachers in Oakland are not paid enough to make ends meet in a district where rental costs have soared 51.1% between 2012 to 2017.

20 The issues facing public schools in Oakland are similar to other school districts across America where teachers led a 30-year high in strikes in 2018. A common theme of these walkouts is drastic declines in public schools funding, where many states have not replenished cuts made to public education during the 2008 economic recession.

“After the last recession, nearly every state cut their school funding, in many cases cut very deeply,” said Michael Leachman, senior director of State Fiscal Research at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

25 Leachman co-authored a November 2017 report that found 29 states were funding less per student in 2015 than they were in 2008. States with high declines in state funding have been sites for some of the largest teacher strikes.

30 “As the economy gradually improved coming out of the recession, some states made the challenge more difficult by deeply cutting income taxes which is the primary revenue source for states,” said Leachman. “They essentially locked in their recession-era cuts for school funding.”

In all, statewide teacher strikes occurred during 2018 and 2019 in West Virginia, California, Colorado, Virginia, Arizona, Oklahoma, Kentucky and North Carolina. Many of these states are leaders in the teacher pay gap, the percentage gap by which public school teachers are paid less than comparable workers. This gap hit a record high in 2017 at 18.7%.

35 “Systemic defunding of public schools, amid tax cuts for the wealthiest and profiteering efforts, has left teachers to lead the fight for one of our highest ideals, the promise to educate each and every kid regardless of means,” said Dr Sylvia Allegretto, co-chair of the Center on Wage and Employment Dynamics at UC Berkeley.

40 The wave of action began in February, 2018, when around 20,000 teachers in West Virginia shut down schools in every county in the state for nine consecutive days before the governor signed a bill giving teachers and other school staff a 5% raise to end the strike.

Around 31,000 teachers in Los Angeles started off 2019’s strike wave in the nation’s second largest school district, walking out for seven days before settling on an agreement that included a pay raise, increase of support staff, and a plan to reduce class sizes to mandated caps.

45 “The takeaway from these teacher strikes are politicians and administrators who think the teacher unions are weak, vulnerable and can be broken have been proven wrong,” said Larry Strauss, a high school English teacher in Los Angeles.

“Whatever they offer after a few days after a strike, they could’ve offered before a strike,” added Strauss.

50 “They could have offered that before they lost millions of dollars during a strike. So the only reason to allow a strike is to test the strength of the union. That’s clearly what they’re doing, and teacher unions so far have stood up to the test.”

Donald Trump has done Britain a favour with his NHS grab

James Kirkup, *The Spectator*, 4th June 2019

"Everything with a trade deal is on the table...so NHS or anything else, a lot more than that".

That was Donald Trump talking about a possible UK-US trade deal after Britain leaves the EU's common trade policy. Cue political drama, headlines and Conservative leadership contenders trying to work out what to say when someone asks them if they would be willing to include NHS procurement in any future trade talks. (Not for the first time, Matt Hancock was first off the blocks, tweeting to rule it out.)

There will doubtless be a great deal of good analysis of what this comment means for the Tory leadership race: does it harm Boris Johnson, whom Trump has previously endorsed?

I have nothing to say on that. I'm more interested in the wider and possibly more important point, which is about Britain's public conversation about trade. And here, I think Donald Trump has just done Britain a favour.

Trade has become central to the Brexit story, yet is understood very poorly. Far too much of our trade debate talks about largely irrelevant things like personal relationships between leaders, and ignores fundamental issues of national economic interest. Put another way: countries don't do trade deals because politicians like (or dislike) each other.

Another thing we largely overlook: the EU is a trade deal, the biggest, deepest one the world has ever seen. And trade deals mean compromises: the more access I give you to my markets, the greater the say I want over the shared rules that will govern the production and exchange of the products that will be traded.

Who compromises most in such cases? Generally, size matters: big trading economies are usually in a position to dictate terms to smaller partners. In the words of professor Dennis Novy of the University of Warwick: "*This whole trade policy world is a game of bullying. The largest guy is the biggest bully and typically gets their way.*"

And the US is still, just about, the biggest bully in world trade. If you want to know more about what that looks like in detail, have a read of the US Trade Representative's outline of negotiating objectives for any trade deal with the US.

You will find that document is rather light on references to the "Special Relationship", our "shared history" and all the other nice words that politicians like to use about UK-US relations. It is heavy with demands and conditions, things that the US would seek to impose on Britain in exchange for making it easier for some British firms to sell some things in the US.

That document, incidentally, suggests that the US probably wouldn't be that interested in the NHS itself: contracts to administer and run NHS services are relatively small beer. Much more attractive from a US corporate perspective is the NHS drug budget; some US pharma firms believe NHS rules unfairly exclude their products from purchase by NHS bodies. That's probably why the USTR objectives paper doesn't mention health services, but does mention "*Procedural Fairness for Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices*" and promises to "*seek standards to ensure that government regulatory reimbursement regimes are transparent, provide procedural fairness, are nondiscriminatory, and provide full market access for U.S. products.*"

The harsh facts of trade are generally overlooked in British debate about trade, where the idea of Britannia ruling the waves still often prevails. Listen only to a certain sort of Brexiteer and you'd easily conclude that as soon as we're free of that dreadful free trade deal we have with those pesky Europeans, the rest of the world will simply queue up to trade with us on preferential terms because, well, we're great.

The awkward truth – that trade deals are long and slow and hard and involve uncomfortable compromises – generally doesn't feature in Brexit-based conversations about trade.

None of this is to say that free trade deals are bad or undesirable: trade is good and makes the world richer and safer. But free trade ain't free: if you want a deal, you're going to have to give things up, including possibly some things you hold very dear indeed. Sooner or later, Brexit Britain was always going to collide with that painful reality.

By setting out, plainly and simply, the truth about trade, Donald Trump has done Britain a favour.

We need a campaign for free speech to take on the professionally offended

Boris Johnson, *The Daily Telegraph*, 4th November 2018

Where is the spirit of Charlie Hebdo? You remember the outpouring of grief when 12 journalists were gunned down at the Paris offices of the satirical magazine. We did everything we could to show our solidarity with these martyrs to free speech.

We held a vigil in Trafalgar Square. We projected the Tricolore on to the walls of the National Gallery. And when we all went around with T-shirts saying "Je suis Charlie", the meaning could not have been clearer. By wearing that logo, we were saying that we may not necessarily have approved of the content of the magazine – or the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed – but we defended absolutely their right to publish.

The phrase "Je suis Charlie" became a meme. It was a hashtag. It was cool. It was on the lips of just about every UK politician. I therefore assumed that everyone accepted the vital connection between free speech – including the freedom to mock and debunk – and economic progress.

When this country rose to greatness in the 18th and 19th centuries, it wasn't just the result of the industrial revolution, but of a concomitant social and intellectual revolution in which men like John Wilkes helped to throw off the shackles of censorship. And it was no accident that this period of technical innovation was accompanied by a new and astonishing irreverence in the media – bashing the church, bashing the crown – and with cartoons so lewd and scatological that these days they would be deemed not fit to print.

I imagined that when people claimed "Je suis Charlie", they were true Voltairean believers in free speech. I have to say that in the three years since the massacre, I have started to wonder what on earth we all thought we were saying.

I have never known a time when people have been so terrified of speaking out of turn, or of causing offence, or else – perhaps even more frightening – of failing to react correctly when someone else has said or done something that might be deemed offensive.

Earlier this year, a man was fined £800 for teaching his dog to perform a Nazi salute. I hold no brief for this chap, and like most people I abhor fascism, even in dogs. But am I wrong to mourn the total waste of time and taxpayers' money, both for the police and the courts? Isn't the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, right when she says that there is already plenty of good statute about hate crime? Shouldn't the police be encouraged to get on with cracking down on burglary and knife crime?

We are getting to the stage where jokes are out, metaphors are banned; and in our universities the students are sticking their fingers in their ears and no-platforming speaker after speaker, including such blameless and eminent people as Germaine Greer, for heaven's sake.

When I was at university, I remember that we invited Gerry Adams, even though we knew that he was a terrorist. We didn't approve of the people we invited; but we wanted the chance to pit our wits against theirs. Isn't that part of the point of a university? Banning Germaine, just because she might say something you find a teensy bit challenging? That isn't the spirit of "Je suis Charlie". It's intellectual Luddism.

Look, I don't want just to criticise the snowflakes and their trigger alerts and their non-percussive clapping. If we are to solve the problem, we have to understand it, and I think I know why people these days are so bruise-easy. They want to ban the giving of offence, because all too often they have themselves suffered offence; and the culprit, I am afraid, is the internet, and the endless acts of pointless psychic aggression that are committed in cyberspace.

[...] It is an iron law of human psychology that those who suffer are all too often moved to cause suffering in return. Those who experience pain have an urge to dish it out; and that, I think, might explain the censoriousness of so many people today.

It may be that young people are so often the victims of cyberspace microaggressions that they turn it round – and direct their anger on anyone else who has visibly transgressed. Hence the witch-hunts. Hence the rush to join the mob with flaming brands and pitchforks, as they converge on anyone who is deemed to have made a slightly off-colour joke or used a metaphor that would have passed without comment a few years ago, but which is now deemed to be outrageous.

How do we fix it? We need to fight, gently, for free speech. We need a campaign for the right to make jokes and the right, within the law, to be satirical to the point of causing mild offence; because it is when you endlessly shush people up, and stifle debate, that extremism flourishes.

And to that end it may sometimes be necessary for us all to grow a slightly thicker hide and take things a bit more in our stride – and instead of pandering to the professional offence-takers, we politicians should occasionally have the guts to say so.

Climate Deniers Are the Hysterical Alarmists, by Emily Atkin, *The New Republic*, May 29th, 2019.

The climate deniers in the Trump administration are at it again. On Monday, *The New York Times* reported that the president is silencing critical government research on climate change and creating a panel to question the scientific consensus that greenhouse gas emissions cause warming. The ultimate goal, one former Trump adviser said, is to stop “silly alarmist predictions about the future.”

5 So, naturally, the president’s pick to lead the panel is a guy who has likened climate activists to Nazis. “The demonization of carbon dioxide is just like the demonization of the poor Jews under Hitler,” William Happer, a 79-year-old physicist and member of Trump’s National Security Council, said in 2014. The quote has not gone unnoticed since then, as many media outlets have cited it over the years. But it has gotten renewed, and perhaps wider, attention since appearing in the *Times*’ story, as
10 incredulous journalists and others on Twitter couldn’t believe anyone—let alone a political adviser in a presidential administration—would say something so egregious.

In reality, though, Happer’s quote isn’t that much more extreme than a lot of climate-denier rhetoric. They, not climate scientists or activists, are the real alarmists: hyperbolic, fear-mongering, and completely divorced from scientific reality.

15 Let’s not forget that Trump himself once tweeted: “The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.”

He may well have been taking his cues from Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the most influential climate denier in the history of Congress, who said on the Senate floor in 2003, “Wake up, America. With all the hysteria, all the fear, all the phony science, could it be that manmade global warming is the
20 greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? I believe it is.”

The climate-denier conspiracy theories continue to this day. Just last week, congressional Republicans invited a man named Marc Morano to testify at a House hearing on the recent United Nations report showing that humans are causing a mass species extinction. Morano called the report a “science con,”
25 accusing the U.N. of putting out “authoritative propaganda” in order to gain “more regulatory control of the economy and people’s lives.” He also accused U.N. officials at the hearing of being in on this alleged scheme, for which he offered no concrete evidence.

Morano is not some random crackpot. Formerly Inhofe’s communications director, he now leads communications for the Committee For a Constructive Tomorrow, a conservative think tank partially funded by oil interests, and is executive director of Climate Depot, a sort of Drudge Report for climate
30 deniers. In other words, he’s an *influential* crackpot.

Climate deniers like Morano and his former boss are nothing if not consistent in their rhetoric: Anyone who calls for urgent action on climate change is a hysterical alarmist, and any action on climate change will kill jobs, tank the economy, and rob Americans of their freedom. “Alarmists are distracting
35 Americans from the pain the Obama administration’s regulations will inflict on our economy while failing to make a significant impact on climate change,” Inhofe wrote in 2015.

Or just look at the recent headlines on CFACT’s website: “Climate hysteria,” “Freedom under assault,” “‘Extinction crisis’ speciously targets free markets,” “Environmental indoctrination in our schools”...

It’s clear who the real alarmists are. Yes, rational people who accept the scientific consensus about climate change are generally “alarmed” by it, just as they’re alarmed that one of the two major parties
40 in America refuses to accept that consensus. But an “alarmist,” by definition, is “someone who is considered to be exaggerating a danger and so causing needless worry or panic.” The facts show that humans have every reason to panic about humanity’s future on this planet. It’s the deniers who are guilty of exaggeration and needless worry. As *The Washington Post*’s Daniel Drezner wryly tweeted: “It’s true, when they first came for carbon monoxide I said nothing...”

45 It takes a warped mind to believe that the real threat to civilization isn’t climate change, but government action to reduce climate change. And it takes yet another warped mind to consider that person worthy of a powerful position in the federal government.

Be alarmed. Be very alarmed.

Politicians can no longer ignore the national outrage of university funding

Rachel Cunliffe, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27th May 2019

Should we cut student fees in light of the revelations that many degrees just aren't value for money? That's the suggestion of the Augur review into higher education, due to be published this week. And take a deep breath, because it highlights the bizarre reality of our dysfunctional system.

The report's headline recommendation to cut fees from £9,250 a year to £7,500, will garner the most publicity, as the education commentariat agonises over what the "fair" price of a degree should be. Yet the interest rate on student loans is also under scrutiny – and rightly so. At a staggering 6.1 per cent, it's eight times higher than the Bank of England base rate, and starts accruing from the day it's taken out, meaning that it rises while individuals are still studying. The Augur review recommends slashing the rate to 1.5 per cent – essentially back to where it was before the 2012 reforms.

This, however, is just tinkering on the edges of a much deeper problem, and one that won't be solved by arguing over fees or interest rates. We need far more than that, because the British university system is a national scandal, which incentivises unscrupulous institutions to lure teenagers onto worthless courses, then saddles them with unpayable debt, safe in the knowledge that they will be subsidised by other graduates, and by the taxpayer.

If that sounds like unfair hyperbole, think about it from the perspective of a university, perhaps a relatively new institution competing with more prestigious peers for funding. The maximum you can charge a domestic or EU student is £9,250 a year. You get that money upfront, courtesy of the government, with – outrageously – no conditions about teaching quality.

It's a lot more expensive to teach physics in a well-equipped lab with hours of close supervision than it is media studies with one lecture a week and instructions to go do some independent reading, so it's obvious which courses you're going to flog most. And with the cap lifted on how many places you can offer, you can rake in a host of £9,250 cheques, with virtually no accountability.

Of course, you have to get the students to enrol, but that's much easier when they're not actually paying anything at the start. You can name the degree something that implies it's the route to a designated career, even if most people doing that job manage just fine without such a specific qualification.

A glitzy prospectus and promise of free tech gadgets or even cash bonuses (yes, Bath Spa University actually pays candidates £750 to accept its offers) help to distract from the dire figures about what graduates of your degree in "Digitally-Enabled Project Management In An Ergonomic Environment" can expect to earn. By the time the scam is revealed, the student will be long gone, and the money long spent.

Obviously, this isn't the way that all or even most universities operate. In many cases a degree is still worth it, especially in STEM subjects or from a Russell Group institution. But our nation's obsession with increasing the number of graduates at all costs has let these underhand practices continue for years. And it's only now that we are belatedly realising our folly.

In November, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published a report on graduate earnings, with the scandalous revelation that for many, university just isn't worth it. By the age of 29, male graduates in art subjects were on average earning less than men from similar backgrounds with no degree at all. Education secretary Damian Hinds has also released tax data exposing the worst-value institutions, whose graduates are, in some cases, earning less than £20,000 five years after leaving – well below the national average.

Clearly, these individuals would have been better off with a technical qualification, an apprenticeship, or even just three years in the working world. They can never get back the years they wasted at a sub-standard institution. The only silver lining is that their sky-rocketing debt is mitigated somewhat, as it will be years before they earn enough to meet the repayment threshold of £25,725, and the amount they pay back over the 30 year period will be kept low in line with their earnings.

So who does pay? Graduates of other, better institutions whose earning potential is much higher. The IFS estimates that 83 per cent will never pay off their loans in full, but the ludicrous interest system means that a graduate with a good starting salary could spend 30 years repaying three or four times the amount they initially borrowed, and still owe money at the end. And when this unsustainable house of cards inevitably collapses, it's the taxpayer who foots the bill, as the government forgives unpaid debt.

Ultimately, the way to break this cycle isn't to lower fees, although perhaps the government should make room for market forces and allow some price distinction based on the cost of a course and earning potential it offers. Lowering the interest rate and extending the repayment period are both good moves to make the system fairer, but they won't solve the underlying problem either.

The only solution is to hold universities accountable for what they offer. Set criteria for what constitutes a 'value-for-money' degree, both for the graduate and the government, and refuse to offer student loans for ones that miss the mark. If that means institutions cutting places, or even going bankrupt, let them – that's the price they pay for failing their students. [...]



For Low-Wage Workers, the Fight For 15 Movement Has Been a Boon, by Sarah Jones, *New York Magazine*, December 1st, 2018.

5 The Fight for 15 movement to raise minimum wages directly led to a collective \$68 billion raise for 22 million low-wage workers in both the public and private sectors. That's the conclusion of new analysis published by the National Employment Law Center, which backs a higher minimum wage. "Of the \$68 billion in additional income, the overwhelming share (70 percent, or \$47 billion) is the result of \$15 minimum wage laws that the Fight for \$15 won in California, New York, Massachusetts, Flagstaff, Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco, the District of Columbia, Montgomery County, the Twin Cities, Seattle, and SeaTac over the past few years," NELP researchers reported. NELP further found that the \$68 billion figure is "more than 14 times larger than the total raise under the last federal minimum wage increase, approved in 2007."

10 Since Fight for 15 launched in 2012, the idea of a \$15 minimum wage has become a popular cause for progressive activists, and an increasingly popular talking point for Democrats occupying or seeking elected office. The party's official platform now includes a commitment to a \$15 minimum wage and in 2017, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi announced that the party would introduce a bill reflecting that commitment if Democrats took back the House. They're now poised to make good on that promise in January, though with Republicans in charge of the Senate and the White House, the federal minimum wage probably won't budge for years.

15 At the state and city levels, however, voters have begun to take matters into their own hands. As NELP notes, a number of cities and states have already passed minimum wage increases – some to \$15 an hour, some to \$12 or lower. On November 6, voters in Missouri and Arkansas voted to raise their minimum wages to \$12 by 2023 and \$11 by 2021 respectively. But even when voters support minimum wage hikes, they can be less popular with their elected officials. The Washington, D.C. city council repealed a minimum wage increase for tipped workers even though voters resoundingly approved it at the ballot box; the city's Democratic mayor, Muriel Bowser, even backed a challenger to Council member Elissa Silverman, who had opposed the repeal. In Michigan, the *Detroit News* reports, Republican state legislators have already moved to scale back a minimum wage increase, which the legislature passed in September in order to keep it off November's ballot.

25 Opponents of minimum wage increases – like the D.C. restaurateurs who campaigned against higher wages for tipped workers – typically argue that extra expenses will force them to fire workers or even close, harming employers and employees alike. More research is necessary, but right now there's no conclusive proof that a higher minimum wage leads to significant job losses. After Ontario, Canada passed a steep minimum wage hike, the state did initially lose jobs. But as Bloomberg News reported in February 2018, economists aren't convinced that the losses are related to a higher minimum wage. Experts interviewed by the website pointed to market corrections as a possible factor, and noted that some low-wage industries affected by the hike actually added jobs, making the law's impact difficult to gauge.

35 In the U.S., the University of Washington's latest publication in its ongoing study of Seattle's minimum wage hike urges a more nuanced conclusion. As Noam Scheiber explained in a piece for the *New York Times*, researchers found that for low-wage employees who worked at least 600 to 700 hours per year prior to the minimum wage increase received a consisted pay bump after the increase took effect. In other words, the wage hike didn't cost them enough hours to offset the intended pay increase. Workers the researchers defined as "new entrants," who weren't working but might at some later date, may have suffered some negative consequences. "They note that, at the time of the first increase, the growth rate in new workers in Seattle making less than \$15 an hour flattened out and was lagging behind the growth rate in new workers making less than \$15 outside Seattle's county. This suggests that the minimum wage had priced some workers out of the labor market, according to the authors," Scheiber wrote. Even so, other market factors may contribute to that lagging growth rate for new entrants – Seattle is, after all, an increasingly expensive place to live, and on its own, a higher minimum wage may not be enough to offset rising rents.

45 While a higher minimum wage only addresses one aspect of America's ever-growing inequality problem, it does rectify an on-going injustice. Because of inflation and rising costs of living, the current federal minimum wage counts for less than it did when it was established in 2007. NELP's analysis seems to reinforce what activists have claimed all along – that higher minimum wages will make positive differences in the lives of America's lowest-paid workers.

I Know Where I Came From. Does President Trump?, by Bernie Sanders, *The New York Times* June 2nd, 2019.

My father came to this country from Poland at the age of 17 with barely a nickel in his pocket. I spent my first 18 years, before I left home for college, in a three-and-a-half-room, rent-controlled apartment in Brooklyn. My mother's dream was to own her own home, but we never came close. My father's salary as a paint salesman paid for basic necessities, but never much more.

As a young man I learned the impact that lack of money had on family life. Every major household purchase was accompanied by arguments between my parents.

I remember being yelled at for going to the wrong store for groceries and paying more than I should have. I've never forgotten the incredible stress of not having much money, a reality that millions of American families experience today.

We are the wealthiest nation in the history of the world and, according to President Trump, the economy is "booming." Yet most Americans have little or no savings and live paycheck to paycheck.

Today our rate of childhood poverty is among the highest of any developed country in the world, millions of workers are forced to work two or three jobs just to survive, hundreds of thousands of bright young people cannot afford to go to college, millions more owe outrageous levels of student debt, and half a million people are homeless on any given night. Over 80 million Americans have inadequate health insurance or spent part or all of last year without any insurance, and one out of five cannot afford the prescription drugs they need.

While wages in the United States have been stagnant for over 40 years, we have more income and wealth inequality than at any time since the 1920s.

Today, the wealthiest three families in the country own more wealth than the bottom half of the American people and the top 1 percent owns more wealth than the bottom 90 percent. Millions of workers earn starvation wages even as nearly half of all new income is going to the top 1 percent.

Gentrification is ravaging working-class neighborhoods, forcing many struggling Americans to spend half or more of their incomes to put a roof over their heads. The rent-controlled apartment I grew up in was small, but at least we could afford it.

I am running for president because we must defeat Donald Trump, the most dangerous president in the modern history of our country. But, if we are to defeat Mr. Trump, we must do more than focus on his personality and reactionary policies.

We must understand that unfettered capitalism and the greed of corporate America are destroying the moral and economic fabric of this country, deepening the very anxieties that Mr. Trump appealed to in 2016. The simple truth is that big money interests are out of control, and we need a president who will stand up to them.

Wall Street, after driving the United States into the worst economic downturn since the 1930s, now makes tens of billions in profits while forcing working-class Americans to pay usurious interest rates on their credit card debt. The top 10 American drug companies, repeatedly investigated for price fixing and other potentially illegal actions, made nearly \$70 billion in profits last year, even as Americans paid the most per capita among developed nations for their prescription medicine.

Top executives in the fossil fuel industry spend hundreds of millions on campaign contributions to elect candidates who represent the rich and the powerful, while denying the reality of climate change.

Major corporations like Amazon, Netflix, General Motors and dozens of others make huge profits, but don't pay federal income taxes because of a rigged tax system they lobbied to create.

Back in 1944, in his State of the Union speech, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt reminded the nation that economic security is a human right, and that people cannot be truly free if they have to struggle every day for their basic needs. I agree.

We must change the current culture of unfettered capitalism in which billionaires have control over our economic and political life. We need to revitalize American democracy and create a government and economy that works for all.

Yes, the government should guarantee a decent paying job for all Americans and universal health care through a single-payer system. Yes, we should raise the minimum wage to a living wage of \$15 an hour, make it easier for workers to join unions, provide free tuition to public colleges and substantially lower student debt. Yes, we should wean ourselves off of fossil fuels, reform a racist criminal justice system and enact comprehensive immigration reform with a path toward citizenship.

As the working-class son of an immigrant, I know where I came from. My values as a candidate were shaped by the experiences of my youth — and by the realization that many Americans face the same struggles today.

Conservatives dishonestly try to link the policies I favor with those of authoritarian regimes. But I am calling for a true democracy, one that abides by the principle of one person, one vote, and that doesn't allow billionaires to buy elections.

F.D.R. did it. We can do it again.

As a 'disadvantaged' student, I would have been horrified to get into Oxbridge as a special favour

Alison Pearson, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21st May 2019

When I went up to Cambridge in 1978 to read law, I was from what you would now call “a disadvantaged background”. I had a full maintenance grant and my mother’s annual pay packet would scarcely have stretched to a wheel of one of the Volvo estates that decanted many of my fellow first years in the court of our ancient college. Did I feel poor and disadvantaged? I did not.

Apart from being baffled by middle-class paraphernalia like mug-trees (mugs had a tree – seriously?) and the way all the boarding-school kids seemed to know each other, I was confident that I had earned the right to study alongside the very best. No special favours needed. I sat a very hard entrance exam and was marked as rigorously as all the other candidates. Honestly, I was so ridiculously proud of getting that Cambridge place. Forty years on, I can still feel the backward somersault my heart performed when I opened the letter.

If someone had told me that the college only admitted me because of “contextual data” – my family’s low income, the paucity of books in our house, the fact I was from a broken home, or because, in my touching ignorance, I thought a *Reader’s Digest* condensed version of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* was a literary masterpiece (bless!), I would have been mortified. I wouldn’t have wanted to be patronised in that way. If I wasn’t good enough to be admitted on my own merits to a university renowned for its excellence, then I’d rather not have gone to Oxbridge at all.

Yet, this is the very thing that Oxford now plans to do to young people just like I was. From 2020, Oxford will offer places to students with lower grades from disadvantaged backgrounds. Typically, an Oxford offer would never be less than AAA. However, those admitted under the new scheme could be accepted with grades as low as ABB. Some will be allowed in on academic “potential” alone. By 2025, the university aims for 25 per cent of its intake to “come from the UK’s most under-represented backgrounds”.

The move follows criticism that pupils at independent schools are being pushed out of Oxford and Cambridge by social engineering. Dr Anthony Wallerstein, the headmaster of Stowe, said recently that the number of privately educated pupils getting places had been “driven down” as part of efforts to boost diversity. Education minister Damian Hinds countered by saying that increasing state-school students at top universities “should be celebrated”. It’s “at the heart of my philosophy of trying to promote social mobility”.

Right, let me use what remains of my Cambridge brain to unpick what is actually going on here. The first thing to say is that, historically, private schools have taken far more than their fair share of Oxbridge places. That’s mainly because their pupils are much better educated and prepared than state-school proles like me. Oh, and handily, the Head of History happens to know someone in the Admissions Office at X college...

So, if an Oxford tutor has a choice between two candidates of equal merit, and one is privately educated and the other went to the local comp, then it is absolutely right to pick the state-school youngster. He or she will have done all of the heavy lifting themselves, compared to their silver spoon-fed counterparts. Meritocrats should have no problem with that at all. It’s plain wrong for wealthy parents to buy rocket-boosters for their offspring to bag them a coveted space they don’t really deserve at one of the world’s top universities.

The trouble starts when well-meaning, guilt-stricken liberals (that’s pretty much all university lecturers) start lowering the bar because too many comprehensives are bad at helping the brightest pupils to reach their full potential. (And too many teachers are Corbynists who detest Oxbridge anyway.) Consider this perverse logic: those class warriors who are keenest on social mobility are also violently opposed to grammar schools, the greatest-known engine of social mobility, which give poorer children a high-class academic education that enables them to compete on a level playing field with their more privileged counterparts.

A report by King’s College London pointed out that “a group of elite state schools” was securing its pupils a very large number of places at top universities. “One grammar school in Barnet sent 16 per cent of its pupils to Oxbridge in one year,” it complained, “A key reason that certain state schools do so well in terms of Oxbridge entry is that they are selective.”

Well, I never! How did they ever figure that one out? Oxford and Cambridge are highly selective (well, they were). Grammar schools select the most academically able children and develop their minds in classes undisrupted by kids who don’t want to work. Being clever is prized, not disdained. That’s why, back in the Fifties and Sixties, in the heyday of the grammars, state-school pupils began to outnumber the private kids at Oxbridge. [...]

The funny thing is, all those years ago when I got into Cambridge, I was intimidated by the academics who taught me. They knew so much, I thought. They did. But not about life as we know it. It took me a while to figure out that there are very few people capable of greater stupidity than the highly intelligent. I’m afraid that Oxford, with its discriminatory new admissions policy, could be about to prove that.

Kaepernick ads spark boycott calls, but Nike is seen as winning in the end, by Daniel Trotta, *Reuters*, September 4th 2018.

Protesters burned their Nike shoes, investors sold shares and some consumers demanded a boycott after the footwear and apparel maker launched an advertising campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick, the NFL quarterback who sparked a national controversy by kneeling during the national anthem. But the brand recognition that comes with the campaign may be just what the company wanted, and marketing experts predicted it would ultimately succeed.

The ad revived a raging debate in the United States that started in 2016 when Kaepernick, then with the San Francisco 49ers, began kneeling to protest multiple police shootings of unarmed black men. “This is right on the money for Nike. They stand for this irreverent, rebellious attitude. In this case, it’s reinforcing the brand,” said Erich Joachimsthaler, CEO of strategy consulting firm Vivaldi.

While some fans praised Kaepernick and other players who joined him in kneeling as patriotic dissenters, critics led by U.S. President Donald Trump blasted the protesters as ungrateful and disrespectful. Trump called Nike’s campaign “a terrible decision” in an interview with the *Daily Caller* published on Tuesday, but he also showed some respect for Kaepernick’s right to speak out.

“As much as I disagree with the Colin Kaepernick endorsement, in another way — I mean, I wouldn’t have done it. In another way, it is what this country is all about, that you have certain freedoms to do things that other people think you shouldn’t do,” Trump said.

The NFL, which gave in to pressure from Trump and ordered players not to kneel on the field during the anthem, nonetheless praised Kaepernick.

“The social justice issues that Colin and other professional athletes have raised deserve our attention and action,” said Jocelyn Moore, the NFL’s executive vice president of communications and public affairs.

In the immediate backlash against the campaign, announced on Monday, Nike shares fell nearly 4 percent at one point on Tuesday and closed down 3.2 percent.

Calls for a boycott fed social media buzz about the campaign. There were 2.7 million mentions of Nike over the previous 24 hours, the social media analysis firm Talkwalker said at midday, an increase of 135 percent over the previous week.

After his protests, Kaepernick could not find a job for the 2017 season and sued the National Football League, accusing owners of colluding to blackball him. He is still without a team.

Nike has sponsored Kaepernick since 2011 and said he will be one of several faces for a campaign marking the 30th anniversary of its “Just Do It” slogan.

The ad refers to Kaepernick’s loss of NFL income with the quote: “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.”

Some who were offended by the choice posted social media pictures of Nike shoes they had set on fire or socks with the Nike swoosh cut out.

Twitter user Sean Clancy, or @sclancy79, posted a picture of a pair of Nike trainers on fire on Tuesday that was retweeted 20,000 times. Athletes including Serena Williams, LeBron James, Kevin Durant and Chris Paul showed support.

The controversy may have been a convenient excuse for some investors to sell an over-valued stock, Vivaldi’s Joachimsthaler said.

Christopher Svezia, a footwear and apparel analyst at Wedbush Securities Inc., said Nike shares were trading at roughly 30 times next year’s forecast earnings, compared with 24 percent for rival Adidas.

“Nike more than anyone else really knows who their customer is,” Svezia said, describing them as largely 14- to 22-year-old males.

Matt Powell, a senior adviser with market research firm NPD Group, predicted the boycott would fizzle. “Old angry white guys are not a core demographic for Nike,” he said.

Barry Lowenthal, CEO of The Media Kitchen, praised the campaign and said Nike has long proven successful in using celebrity endorsements to promote its brand, a precursor to what is known as influencer marketing in the social media age.

“These kind of endorsement deals were the first version of influencer marketing. Of course they know it works. It’s classic product placement,” Lowenthal said.

Even former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad weighed in, tweeting: “The #NFL season will start this week, unfortunately once again @Kaepernick7 is not on a NFL roster.”

My new Brexit Party stands ready to defend democracy

Nigel Farage, *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 February 2019

It seems increasingly clear that Theresa May's appalling Withdrawal Agreement, the worst deal in history, will not pass through the House of Commons. Perhaps the only way in which it could is if the Government repeats Edward Heath's tactics in 1972, when he forced the original European Communities Act through with the support of Labour. Mrs May's problem is that she knows doing the same now would irreparably split her own party.

I have thought for many months that the most likely outcome is the can getting kicked down the road. I still passionately hope and pray that we will leave the EU on March 29, but be in no doubt that, if Article 50 does get extended, I am ready to act.

That's why the Electoral Commission's official recognition of a new political party – the Brexit Party – is good news for those of us who believe in democracy.

The party was founded with my full support and with the intention of fighting the European elections on May 23 if Brexit has not been delivered by then.

I have made it clear many times that I will not stand by and do nothing if the referendum result is betrayed, so should this election need to be contested, I will stand as a candidate for the Brexit Party and I will give it my all.

I sincerely hope that this prospect is recognised by both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party as a threat. I say this in the knowledge that it was the surge in support for Ukip which led the Conservative government under David Cameron to agree to grant the people of the United Kingdom the EU referendum in the first place.

If only Ukip had stayed on a steady course, it would now be riding high in the polls. The decision to become a party of street activism, and to work with and entertain characters with criminal records, has effectively put a glass ceiling on its future success and rules the party out from being a serious electoral threat. What a waste. But even before this catastrophic change in direction, Ukip was in trouble and making very bad decisions.

The ultimate ruling body was the NEC, generally made up of people with little understanding of politics or knowledge of logistics. Despite being the leader, at times this arrangement left me virtually powerless. [...]

In contrast, the Brexit Party will have a leader who then appoints a board of their choosing, and the party will ultimately succeed and fail on the judgement and personality of that leader. This will be a disciplined machine and will run more like a company. Dissenters can go elsewhere.

If Mrs May and Jeremy Corbyn do not welcome the prospect of this new electoral threat, and would like me to retire from frontline politics, they have a very straightforward opportunity to keep themselves happy. All they have to do is deliver a proper Brexit – the one which 17.4 million people voted for in June 2016. Otherwise, this threat will turn into a promise.

While I know that there is a huge amount to do in a very short space of time to build and organise a new party so that it can fight a national election, I have done this before. Indeed, under my leadership, Ukip topped the poll in the 2014 European election. Time may be tighter in 2019, but it would certainly be my intention to achieve the same result again.

Furthermore, it is possible that in today's political climate, as even more people self-identify as Leavers or Remainers ahead of Labour or Conservative, the Brexit Party could pose a more significant and longer-term problem for the two main parties.

There is a growing sense that a fundamental realignment of British politics is long overdue. There is no doubt in my mind that Mrs May and Mr Corbyn – perhaps the two weakest leaders of the major parties ever to have graced the House of Commons – are aware of this.

Last month I wrote that my New Year's resolution was to hope for the best and prepare for the worst, and I meant it. With that in mind, I can confirm that the Brexit Party has already received hundreds of applications from people all over the country who are ready to stand as candidates.

On top of this, a significant amount of money has been pledged to the Brexit Party if it is forced to take part in an election. The engine is running, in other words.

It goes without saying that there should be no need for the Brexit Party to exist, let alone for it to be activated. Increasingly, however, I have a feeling that it will be necessary. In defence of democracy, we stand ready for battle..

It isn't just the Covington Catholic students — MAGA hats are a teen trend, by Rebecca Jennings, *Vox*, January 22nd, 2019.

One image was inescapable on social media over MLK Day weekend: the smirking face of a teenage boy in a “Make America Great Again” baseball cap, staring down a Native American elder.

5 The boy was Nick Sandmann, a student at Covington Catholic High School in Park Hills, Kentucky, who along with the dozens of classmates shouting and seeming to mock Native American chants behind him, had been bused in to Washington, DC, for the March for Life. In videos that circulated on Twitter and YouTube this weekend, Sandmann smiles inches away from the man, Omaha elder Nathan Phillips, who had been participating in Friday’s Indigenous Peoples March.

10 The reaction was swift: The Diocese of Covington and Covington Catholic High School released a statement condemning the students’ actions, while many writers placed the image within the canon of photographs from American history in which a white man smiles jeeringly at peaceful protesters of color. Ruth Graham wrote at Slate that it’s “the face that sneers, ‘What? I’m just standing here,’ if you flinch or cry or lash out. The face knows that no matter how you react, it wins.”

15 This face and the hat above it are symbolic of the same thing. Since the election, MAGA hats have become emblems of both transgression and belonging that mean different things to different people.

MAGA hats, however, hold special significance for some middle and high school students. Travel to any tourist destination in DC and you’ll see swaths of school groups, many of them wearing hats purchased at nearby souvenir shops. It’s not a coincidence that most of the kids wearing them happen to be white: All over the country, there have been reports of students in MAGA hats bullying their Latino, Middle Eastern, Black, 20 Asian, and Jewish classmates on the basis of race and religion.

Students wearing the caps, like the group from Covington, often repeat the slogans that the president built his campaign around. “Fake news” and “build the wall” became their own memes, pithy phrases tailor-made to be shouted by large groups of people. But just like the hat and its slogan, these phrases have far-reaching consequences. The press, and truth itself, is under direct attack from the president, and Trump’s demands for \$5 billion of funding for his border wall has now contributed to the longest government shutdown in US history, 25 which so far is estimated to have cost the American economy more than the cost of the proposed fence.

These are problems, however, for adults to worry about and for kids to make fun of. In a 2017 report on the draw that MAGA hats hold for teens, Hilary George-Parkin noted that the more that adults wring their hands about the potential dangers of Trumpist symbolism, the easier it is for kids to laugh about how dramatic they’re being. “I think kids think of [MAGA hats] as more of a joke,” a 14-year-old named Julia from New Jersey told her, “and adults don’t.” 30

Plus, the more taboo the hats become, the more power they hold, at least from a fashion standpoint. Teens have always been quick to embrace clothing that adults find distasteful or uncomfortable, from visible underwear to rude novelty T-shirts. For some teens who wear MAGA hats, it’s no more than a fashion trend. “I only got it because everyone else was,” Julia added. “I doubt I’d wear it after the trip because I’m not really much of a hat person anyway.” 35

But for those for whom the phrase “Make America Great Again” refers to only a small slice of who or what “America” is, it isn’t just a hat. One Muslim American mother whose son went on a middle school trip to DC in which “every single white kid besides maybe one or two” returned wearing a MAGA hat said that the red caps became a familiar marker of exclusionary preteen politics. 40

”I think 12-year-old boys use it as a form of bullying — identifying themselves as part of this group to the exclusion of others just for the fun of it,” she told George-Parkin. “That’s what it seemed like to me. Us over here with the red hats, and you over there ... you’re not even an individual anymore. Now you’re just one of the brown kids and you’re not one of us.” 45

While many liberals and progressives see the campaign slogan as a dog whistle against nonwhite Americans, some Trump supporters see MAGA hat-wearers as brave bastions in the war against political correctness. Actress and #MeToo activist Alyssa Milano, for instance, referred to MAGA hats as “the new white hood,” whereas right-wing commentators claim that those who take its message seriously are “sensitive snowflakes.” That’s a lot of symbolism to hang on a hat, so it isn’t much of a surprise that some kids and teenagers have embraced MAGA caps as a fashion trend. As far as accessories go, they have everything: Their message is straightforward and provocative, and protects the wearer as part of a “winning” team. Much like Sandmann’s 50 facial expression, his MAGA hat is all too aware of the power it, and he, holds. And if people are offended, then, well, he could just say that in fact, he wasn’t smirking.

19

Ocasio-Cortez: Fighting climate change will be ‘the civil rights movement of our generation’, by Miranda Green, The Hill, December 3rd, 2018.

Speaking at a televised town hall on Monday, Rep.-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) said that the government’s next steps toward fighting climate change need to be as momentous as the civil rights movement or NASA’s push to put a man on the moon.

5 “This is going to be the Great Society, the moonshot, the civil rights movement of our generation. That is the scale of the ambition that this movement is going to require,” the New York Democrat said. Sitting on a panel during the "Climate Change Town Hall" organized by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Ocasio-Cortez challenged the Trump administration's scaled-back approach to fighting global warming and called for more aggression from Congress once she joins the House in January.

10 “It’s unsurprising that the response to any bold proposal that we have is to incite fear. To incite fear of loss, to incite fear of others. To incite fear of our future. But the only way we are going to get out of this situation is to be courageous,” she said of the White House.

The comments from the bold progressive, who created shock waves over the summer with her primary win over veteran Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-N.Y.), echo an initiative she’s been pushing since the midterm elections.

15 The "Green New Deal" is an idea Ocasio-Cortez first introduced during a sit-down at House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi’s (D-Calif.) congressional office in late November. It has since been championed by 15 Democratic House lawmakers as a way to create a select committee to focus on transitioning the country toward 100 percent renewable energy.

20 Sanders, who has been a vocal supporter of the effort, highlighted the need for multiple venues of climate action during his town hall. As evidence for the need for swift action, Sanders pointed to recently released climate reports from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change as well as one from the United States. Both warn of the irreversible effects of warming temperatures.

“We are dealing with what the scientific community tells us is the great crisis facing our planet and facing humanity, and that is climate change,” Sanders said.

25 “All of these reports make a very simple and profound point. And that is, time is late and as a planet that means countries all over the world, not just the U.S and Russia, are going to have to stand up and take on the fossil fuel industry. ... This is a crisis situation, it is unprecedented and we’ve got to act in an unprecedented way.”

30 Sanders blasted many of his colleagues, including some Democrats, who take money from the fossil-fuel industry in the form of campaign contributions.

Membership to the Green New Deal select committee would include a promise to not accept donations from any fossil fuel company.

35 Critics have blamed the industry and its lobbyists for binding the hands of Republicans in Congress who are either skeptical of the human role in climate change, or else argue moving toward renewable energy is not economically feasible.

Both Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez decried those as false talking points.

“First of all it’s just plain wrong, that idea that we are going to somehow lose economic activity,” said Ocasio-Cortez.

40 “It’s inevitable that we will create jobs. We can use the transition to 100 percent renewable energy as the vehicle to truly deliver and establish economic, social and racial justice in the United States of America.”

Ocasio-Cortez, an emerging progressive darling who has faced a number of potshots from Republicans and right-leaning publications during the transition period, took the opportunity at the town hall to chide her critics.

45 “It’s an interesting puzzle in how media, especially you know right-ring media, but all media treats me. Because in our journey, I am a working person who won a seat against all odds,” she said.

Sanders, interjected adding: “Can we interrupt this program to make an announcement on your shoes?” The comment was a jab at Fox News's morning show "Fox & Friends," which the day of the federal government's national climate report's release opted to focus a segment on the future congresswoman’s shoes.

50 Looking to the future, Ocasio-Cortez pushed the importance of organizing a holistic approach to fixing climate change.

“When we try to solve this issue piecemeal, we will not solve it in time,” she warned.

Gillette #MeToo razors ad on 'toxic masculinity' gets praise – and abuse by Alexandra Topping, Kate Lyons et Matthew Weaver, *The Guardian*, January 15th, 2019.

Shaving company Gillette has been bombarded with both praise and abuse after launching an advertising campaign promoting a new kind of positive masculinity.

Engaging with the #MeToo movement, the company's new advertising campaign plays on its 30-year tagline "The best a man can get", replacing it with "The best men can be".

5 The advertisement features news clips of reporting on the #MeToo movement, as well as images showing sexism in films, in boardrooms, and of violence between boys, with a voice over saying: "Bullying, the MeToo movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity, is this the best a man can get?"

The film, called *We Believe: the Best Men Can Be*, immediately went viral with more than 4m views on YouTube in 48 hours and generated both lavish praise and angry criticism.

10 "This commercial isn't anti-male. It's pro-humanity," wrote Bernice King, daughter of the late civil rights legend Martin Luther King. "And it demonstrates that character can step up to change conditions."

The Emmy-award winning actor and prominent Donald Trump supporter James Woods meanwhile accused Gillette of "jumping on the 'men are horrible' campaign" and pledged to boycott its products.

15 Far-right magazine *The New American* attacked the advertisement's message, saying it "reflects many false suppositions", adding that: "Men are the wilder sex, which accounts for their dangerousness – but also their dynamism."

But Duncan Fisher, head of policy and innovation for the Family Initiative, welcomed the company's revolutionary shift in messaging and said it played into a new narrative about positive masculinity. "There are a lot of men who want to stand up for a different type of masculinity, but for many there has not been a way for men to express that, we just need to give them a voice," he said. "Obviously this is an advert created by an agency to sell razors but it represents an attempt to change the dialogue."

20 Others remarked that the intensity of the backlash revealed the necessity for a wider acknowledgement of the damage done to men and women by toxic masculinity.

Among the objections were that the video implied most men were sexual harassers or violent thugs, that it was

25 "virtue-signalling" by a company that doesn't care about the issue, and that the advertisement was emasculating. The film's YouTube page quickly became a cultural battleground, with negative responses outnumbering positive on the platform – which has faced criticism for not doing enough to curtail misogyny in its comments – and many commenters saying they would never buy a Gillette razor again.

The advert threw TV presenter Piers Morgan into an apoplexy, prompting him to declare a boycott of the company and dedicate a column condemning it as part of a "pathetic global assault on masculinity".

30 Responding to Morgan's angry tweets, American broadcast journalist Soledad O'Brien simply tweeted: "Oh shut up Piers," while Canadian comedian Deven Green.

The advertisement shows men intervening to stop fights between boys and calling other men out when they say sexually inappropriate things to women in the streets.

35 "We believe in the best in men: To say the right thing, to act the right way. Some already are in ways big and small. But some is not enough. Because the boys watching today will be the men of tomorrow," the voiceover says.

PR expert Mark Borkowski called the advert part of a "fantastically well-thought through campaign", adding that it appealed to a younger generation that were very aware of the power of advertising and marketing on society.

40 "It is no longer enough for brands to simply sell a product, customers are demanding that they have a purpose – that they stand for something," he said. "Masculinity is a huge part of Gillette's brand, and there is a recognition in this ad that the new generation is reworking that concept of masculinity, and it is no longer the cliché it once was."

Writing in more detail about the thinking of the advert Gillette, which is owned by Procter & Gamble, said the advertisement was part of a broader initiative for the company to promote "positive, attainable, inclusive and healthy versions of what it means to be a man."

45 "It's time we acknowledge that brands, like ours, play a role in influencing culture," it wrote on its website. "From today on, we pledge to actively challenge the stereotypes and expectations of what it means to be a man everywhere you see Gillette. In the ads we run, the images we publish to social media, the words we choose, and so much more." Gillette has also promised to donate \$1m a year for three years to non-profit organisations with programs "designed to inspire, educate and help men of all ages achieve their personal "best" and become role models for the next

50 generation". The campaign follows other campaigns by major international brands that have dealt with social and political issues. In 2018 Nike ran a campaign featuring NFL star Colin Kaepernick, who drew criticism from Donald Trump for kneeling during the national anthem to protest against racism.

There's a big push in 2018 to get young people to register to vote, by Hunter Schwarz, CNN, September 25th, 2018.

In 2018, Beyoncé fans can register to vote at the On The Run II Tour, high schoolers can register from their classrooms and shoppers can register at a participating Levi Strauss location.

5 Voter registration campaigns have long tried to reach young voters where they are, but they're more successful during presidential campaigns, when turnout is up. Organizers this year, however, are hoping things will be different.

"There's certainly a lot of signs that we're going to see increased turnout," said Andy Bernstein, founder and executive director of the nonprofit voter registration group HeadCount, which partnered with the On The Run II Tour, and other brands and musicians. "Everybody seems more engaged."

10 As of last week, HeadCount has registered more than 40,000 people for the midterms. Their goal is 75,000, triple their previous midterm record. And the Ad Council just picked up a 30-second HeadCount spot that will be shown on television and in movie theaters. They estimate it will be seen at least 10 million times.

"For a non-profit getting picked up by the Ad Council is the holy grail," he said. "It's the biggest deal."

15 In past midterm years, the election was seen as a strictly political event, but in 2018, "You have media and brands making the midterm elections a focus of messaging, and really trying to turn it to a cultural event," Bernstein said. Companies that are "very, very conscious of being nonpartisan have really gotten behind the voting message," he said.

20 CEOs for companies including Walmart, Southwest, Kaiser Permanente and Tyson signed onto Time To Vote, committing to giving employees time off to vote. The group also includes companies whose CEOs have been critical of President Donald Trump, like Patagonia and Gap.

Carolyn DeWitt, president and executive director of Rock The Vote, said she thought brands today were "more willing to invest in creating a culture of civic engagement for their employees and their customers." Her group partners with brands including Cosmopolitan, HBO, and Tinder.

25 There are other registration efforts, like Twitter's #BeAVoter campaign, which includes a special emoji and prompts on users' timelines encouraging users to register. MTV's "+1thevote," launched at the Video Music Awards, is its first-ever midterm registration drive. The campaign encourages people to bring their plus one to vote with them, after MTV research found people aged 15-22 are more likely to think inviting a friend to a polling place encourages others to vote than posting about voting on social media does.

30 The United States trails most other developed countries in voter turnout, with 56% of the voting-age population voting in 2016 (Canada's figure is 62% and Mexico is nearly 66%). Younger voters during midterms especially haven't shown up. In 2014, less than a quarter of eligible Millennial voters said they voted, according to Pew.

35 But today's young voters could prove to be a powerful political force because of their sheer numbers. In 2016, the combined number of eligible voters who were 35 or younger rivaled the number of Baby Boomers, and next year, Millennials are projected to surpass Boomers as America's largest living generation, according to Census estimates.

Young voters could be driven by the polls in opposition to Trump. Nearly 60% of those 18-29 disapprove of disapprove of how Trump is handling his job as president, the highest disapproval rate of any age group.

40 Bernstein, the HeadCount executive director, also credits the activism of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students with heightening youth interest in voting. "There's no question that the Parkland students are a catalyst for getting a lot of people focused on elections," he said. "It was the first time that I remember that kids were talking to kids about voting. This was the year that the message was really coming from young people and it wasn't coming from a celebrity reading a script."

45 There still will be plenty of celebrities this year reading from scripts, though. And teleprompters. Former first lady Michelle Obama, co-chair of the voter registration group When We Vote, recorded an ad for the group and is holding events for them.

50 While her husband is campaigning for Democratic candidates, Obama said she wasn't going to tell anyone how to vote, and made her pitch apolitical. It's as if the former first couple were, in this heavily anticipated midterm year, maintaining their former White House lanes. The ex-president is getting political while the former FLOTUS campaigns for civic engagement in the national interest.

"It doesn't matter what leaders you elect," Obama said Sunday at her When We Vote event in Nevada. "If they don't have your vote behind them, there's only so much they can do. It is not about the leader. The power of our democracy is in us."

It's not just the economy, stupid – Brexit is about belonging

Fintan O'Toole, *The Irish Times*, Tuesday 22 January 2019

Before Christmas I was talking to a middle-aged man in Magherafelt, Co Derry. He was from a Catholic background and was active locally in the SDLP. Inevitably, the talk turned to Brexit and the economic harm it would do. But he pointed out that in the 1970s, the Republic was an economic "basket case" while standards of living were much better north of the Border, even for people like him.

5 "And yet," he said, "if someone had given me the chance to vote for a United Ireland, I'd have done it in a heartbeat. I'd have taken the hit. So I understand where people are coming from in England. It's not all about the economy, you know."

He was right, of course, and there is no chance of escaping from the current crisis for these islands until we all recognise that economics arguments will not change many minds.

In the 1990s every wannabe politician or spin doctor in the settled democracies watched the brilliant fly-on-the-wall
10 documentary on Bill Clinton's campaign in 1992, *The War Room*. In it, the campaign manager James Carville sticks a sign on the wall, intended to focus the minds of the staff: "It's the economy, stupid!" It became, of course, conventional wisdom. In his gripping book on the Brexit campaign, *Unleashing Demons*, David Cameron's chief strategist Craig
15 Oliver writes that "Our campaign was based on the simple proposition that electorates don't vote against their own pockets. That view is summed up best in the closest thing to an iron law in politics, James Carville's realisation when
15 running the first Clinton presidential election campaign, 'It's the economy, stupid!'"

The big problem is with the "stupid" bit. It is, of course, never not the economy: people's economic conditions and expectations will always shape their lives and those lives will always shape their political attitudes. But it is not "stupid" to
20 vote for other reasons too. Some people are indeed ignorant or deluded or misled about the economic consequences of their votes. And some people know very well that they are risking their own economic wellbeing but feel it is a price worth
20 paying anyway.

Ireland is a perfect case in point. For about the first 70 years of Irish independence, the decision to leave the United Kingdom was – on a cold calculation – a mistake. Most ordinary Irish people were worse off than their UK counterparts – that's why so many of them emigrated to Britain. And yet very few of them would have voted to go back into the UK. We
25 should remember this when we look across the water and wonder at the obvious willingness of so many people in England
25 to trade economic self-harm for an idea (however misplaced) of national independence.

One of the fatal flaws of progressive centre-left politics as it developed under Clinton and Tony Blair was its contradictory
30 attitude to all of this. On the one hand, the centre-left knew very well that it was not all about the economy – it embraced the importance of race, gender and sexual orientation. On the other, it came to believe that identity politics stopped where
30 economics began. As the old working class was dismantled and the power of labour unions diminished, it was convenient
30 to forget that economics and identity are and always have been deeply intertwined.

So it was easy to understand that a sense of belonging might be more important than money to minorities, but less and
less understood that the same might be true for white working-class communities. Black pride or gay pride were good
things, but the old forms of working-class pride – being in a union, for example – were outmoded and the people who
clung to them would just have to get over themselves.

35 Brexit – like the election of Donald Trump and the rise of far-right identity politics in Europe – is a consequence of this
35 contradiction. The anti-Brexit campaign rigidly obeyed the "iron law" that, in the end, people do not vote against their
35 pockets. And most of the arguments against Brexit still come down to dire warnings about jobs and living standards. Those
35 arguments are necessary but they are not sufficient.

There is a long-term crisis of belonging in the UK. Brexit is its most lurid symptom, but it is not a cure. Theresa May's appeal
40 to the "precious, precious union" is mere denial about the rise of English identity. The hard Brexiters, under the cover of
40 nationalism, want to unleash an even more virulent form of globalisation that will destroy what is left of working-class
40 communities.

And yet these liars and fantasists have been allowed to own the most potent political emotions – collective pride, identity
45 belonging. The willingness to sacrifice economic comfort for a sense of the greater good or a higher ideal is not innately
45 self-destructive. Nothing noble or decent is ever accomplished without it. The Right has turned it into a sharp blade and
45 told people to cut themselves with it. Those people think they are making a sacrifice when they are merely being sacrificed.
45 The Left has to speak, not just to their rational desire not to make themselves poorer, but to the bigger reasons why they
45 don't think it's all about money.

Populists are on the rise but this can be a moment for progressives too

Chantal Mouffe, 10 September 2018, *The Guardian*

These are unsettled times for democratic politics. Shocked by the victory of Eurosceptic coalitions in Austria and in Italy, the neoliberal elites – already worried by the Brexit vote and the victory of Donald Trump – now claim democracy is in danger and raise the alarm against a possible return of “fascism”.

There is no denying that western Europe is currently witnessing a “populist moment”. This arises from the multiplication of anti-establishment movements, which signal a crisis of neoliberal hegemony. This crisis might indeed open the way for more authoritarian governments, but it can also provide the opportunity for reclaiming and deepening the democratic institutions that have been weakened by 30 years of neoliberalism.

Our current post-democratic condition is the product of several phenomena. The first one, which I call “post-politics”, is the blurring of frontiers between right and left. It is the result of the consensus established between parties of centre-right and centre-left on the idea that there was no alternative to neoliberal globalisation. Under the imperative of “modernisation”, social democrats have accepted the diktats of globalised financial capitalism and the limits it imposes on state intervention and public policies.

Politics has become a mere technical issue of managing the established order, a domain reserved for experts. The sovereignty of the people, a notion at the heart of the democratic ideal, has been declared obsolete. Post-politics only allows for an alternation in power between the centre-right and the centre-left. The confrontation between different political projects, crucial for democracy, has been eliminated.

This post-political evolution has been characterised by the dominance of the financial sector, with disastrous consequences for the productive economy. This has been accompanied by privatisation and deregulation policies that, jointly with the austerity measures imposed after the 2008 crisis, have provoked an exponential increase in inequality. The working class and the already disadvantaged are particularly affected, but also a significant part of the middle classes, who have become poorer and more insecure.

In recent years, various resistance movements have emerged. They embody what Karl Polanyi presented in *The Great Transformation* as a “countermovement”, by which society reacts against the process of marketisation and pushes for social protection. This countermovement, he pointed out, could take progressive or regressive forms. This ambivalence is also true of today’s populist moment. In several European countries those resistances have been captured by rightwing parties that have articulated, in a nationalistic and xenophobic vocabulary, the demands of those abandoned by the centre-left. Rightwing populists proclaim they will give back to the people the voice that has been captured by the “elites”. They understand that politics is always partisan and requires an us/them confrontation. Furthermore, they recognise the need to mobilise the realm of emotion and sentiment in order to construct collective political identities. Drawing a line between the “people” and the “establishment”, they openly reject the post-political consensus.

Those are precisely the political moves that most parties of the left feel unable to make, owing to their consensual concept of politics and the rationalistic view that passions have to be excluded. For them, only rational debate is acceptable. This explains their hostility to populism, which they associate with demagoguery and irrationality. Alas, the challenge of rightwing populism will not be met by stubbornly upholding the post-political consensus and despising the “deplorables”.

It is vital to realise that the moral condemnation and demonisation of rightwing populism is totally counterproductive – it merely reinforces anti-establishment feelings among those who lack a vocabulary to formulate what are, at core, genuine grievances.

Classifying rightwing populist parties as “extreme right” or “fascist”, presenting them as a kind of moral disease and attributing their appeal to a lack of education is, of course, very convenient for the centre-left. It allows them to dismiss any populists’ demands and to avoid acknowledging responsibility for their rise.

The only way to fight rightwing populism is to give a progressive answer to the demands they are expressing in a xenophobic language. This means recognising the existence of a democratic nucleus in those demands and the possibility, through a different discourse, of articulating those demands in a radical democratic direction.

This is the political strategy that I call “left populism”. Its purpose is the construction of a collective will, a “people” whose adversary is the “oligarchy”, the force that sustains the neoliberal order.

It cannot be formulated through the left/right cleavage, as traditionally configured. Unlike the struggles characteristic of the era of Fordist capitalism, when there was a working class that defended its specific interests, resistances have developed beyond the industrial sector. Their demands no longer correspond to defined social groups. Many touch on questions related to quality of life and intersect with issues such as sexism, racism and other forms of domination. With such diversity, the traditional left/right frontier can no longer articulate a collective will.

To bring these diverse struggles together requires establishing a bond between social movements and a new type of party to create a “people” fighting for equality and social justice. [...]

Racist voter suppression is rampant – and corporate silence is complicity by Reverend William Barber and Rashad Robinson, *The Guardian*, February 1st, 2019.

As top Democrats start to throw their hats into the ring for the 2020, we will see policy proposals such as Medicare for All, criminal justice reform, immigration reform and more circulating as part of their platforms.

But every bold policy is meaningless until we eradicate rampant voter suppression in this country. Millions of Americans don't have a voice on the issues that affect them – mostly because of the deliberate, concerted attempts to stop them from voting.

The blatant racist voter suppression in Georgia, Florida and elsewhere last year revealed the widening cracks in our democracy and the Republican party is becoming only more emboldened in attacking the right to vote.

In Georgia, former secretary of state Brian Kemp has purged over 1.4 million voters from the rolls since 2012. Throughout his campaign for governor, we saw reports of absentee ballots being stolen and faulty machines at voting sites throughout many communities of color.

In Fulton county, a predominantly black area, officials failed to plug in the polling machines, leaving them to operate solely on battery power. The polling place opened with only three working machines.

Let's be clear: the politicians who win elections by targeting black and brown people with voter suppression tactics are also the ones who support policies that hurt all people living in poverty, regardless of race.

That is why voter suppression affects *all* voters – though it often targets black and brown people, it affects everyone. These policies will shape the economic realities of people's day-to-day lives. According to the Census Bureau, about 1.7 million people – roughly 16% of the Georgia's population – are living below the poverty line.

Low-income communities, whether white, black or brown, whose votes were systematically suppressed, may as a result be represented by politicians who oppose a living wage and the expansion of affordable healthcare.

As long as communities of color and poor people are denied voting rights, Color Of Change and Repairers of the Breach will continue to apply political and economic pressure on the corporations enabling voter suppression.

In addition to elected officials, many corporations benefit from voter suppression.

Companies such as Delta, Coca-Cola and UPS, headquartered in Atlanta, profit from tax benefits and a large customer and employee base. These companies aim to lift up Georgia's economy – but their own employees and customers from historically marginalized communities are being silenced and shut out of the political process.

Corporations would like us to believe they're guileless when it comes to voter suppression, innocent bystanders in their own communities. That's simply not true.

Through key campaigns via Color Of Change and the Moral Mondays movement, we have proven our strong record of success in holding corporations accountable and working with them to prevent attacks on civil rights.

It is the communities who possess the power to make change, and we have seen the results. In 2018, people got involved in a way we have never seen before. They started paying attention. This year will be even stronger and we're prepared to take action.

Corporate silence is complicity. These companies have the power and the resources to take a stand, and their consumers must hold them accountable to doing so. We have the power to pressure corporations, civic leaders and influencers to do the right thing and fight with us to protect our civil rights.

When corporations lean in and take action on behalf of fairness and civility, in a non-partisan way, it will immensely impact our currently rigged voting system for all Americans.

The Super Bowl is 3 February in Atlanta. Hundreds of millions of dollars will flow into the NFL and the state of Georgia because of the Super Bowl, but profit should not come at the expense of our democracy and our civil rights.

It's an opportunity for southern-headquartered companies to show they are willing to do more than pay lip service and are ready to take action.

Our organizations will use the big game to point to the fact that corporations are benefiting from their approval of this racist system of voter suppression.

We are launching actions from now until 2020 to highlight in various ways the disenfranchisement and expose the corporate enablers who sit on the sidelines while racist attacks prevent people from making their voices heard.

We're drawing a line in the sand. We demand to see which side of the fight corporations are on: black Americans, civil rights and a strong democracy, or racist politicians' intent on a regressive slide back toward Jim Crow.

Ocasio-Cortez Went Back to Bartending. Slogans Were Served, by Vivian Wang, *The New York Times*, May 31st, 2019.

Officially, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's one-hour return to her bartending days was about a push to raise pay for tipped-wage workers.

5 But as she fielded orders from behind the bar of a restaurant in Jackson Heights, Queens, other concerns intruded. One woman handed her a card, thanking her for her support of the Muslim community and of Representative Ilhan Omar, the Muslim congresswoman from Minnesota. Several people asked for selfies. All around, television cameras pressed in, as Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's team tried fruitlessly to keep them back.

10 The frenzy on Friday at the restaurant, the Queensboro, embodied the perks and challenges of being Ms. Ocasio-Cortez, a 29-year-old political newcomer who overnight became one of the most recognizable politicians in the country. Her origin story — from bartender to underdog congressional candidate to face of the progressive left — is so well known that it has become a symbol of the restless, unpredictable mood of national politics.

The result is that her every move — even the otherwise routine sight of an elected official championing a favored cause — is breathlessly broadcast, followed and scrutinized, with passers-by pressed against the window and conservative

15 She can bring attention to an issue simply by mentioning it on Twitter or, as she did on Friday, showing up for an hour in her district; her fame can also distract, turning every appearance into a circus. When Ms. Ocasio-Cortez shook a cocktail, the room erupted in cheers.

In addition to showing that Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's fame had not waned since her stunning upset last summer over the incumbent, Joseph Crowley, in the Democratic primary, the event Friday also displayed the political strengths that had

20 Ms. Ocasio-Cortez had announced her return to the bar three days earlier on Twitter, where she has more than 4 million followers. She did so in her typically conversational tone then appended several posts about her favorite brunch cocktail and her opposition to sour mix.

25 Her entire appearance was carefully controlled, with most of the crowd made up of nail salon and restaurant workers wearing matching T-shirts and demanding "one fair wage" — the name of the campaign by Restaurant Opportunities Center United, a group that is fighting to raise the wage for tipped workers to the full minimum wage.

The federal minimum wage for tipped workers is \$2.13 an hour; only seven states require tipped workers to be paid the same as other workers. Tipped workers are predominantly women. Ms. Ocasio-Cortez has co-sponsored a bill to double the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024. New York State is also weighing a proposal to bring the tipped wage in

30 In individual conversations with diners as well as remarks to the whole room, Ms. Ocasio-Cortez consistently emphasized how her personal biography had informed her political one — a winning tactic from the campaign trail. She shared stories of experiencing sexual harassment and economic uncertainty as a bartender reliant on tips.

35 "It is so real, the amount of exploitation and harassment and labor violations that you will endure," she said. The event was tightly choreographed to keep attention on the issue at hand. Before Ms. Ocasio-Cortez spoke, several workers shared their stories: Glenda Sefla, a nail salon worker, described working in poorly ventilated spaces, with no lunch hours and no certainty about how much money she would earn each week. Aesha Polanco, a massage therapist and restaurant server, recounted being shown lewd photos by customers and tolerating it for the sake of tips.

40 But it was undeniable that Ms. Ocasio-Cortez was the main draw, so much so that as she left the restaurant through a back door, the crowd chanted "Alexandria! Alexandria!" before turning to "One fair wage!" "Someone that went through the things we're currently going through also has a seat at the table — that's amazing," Portia Green, 32, a bartender from Harlem, said afterward.

"I fangirled over her," said Mary Catherine Ford, 42, from Astoria, who said she had snagged a seat because her friend was a regular and had been alerted to Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's visit by the owner.

45 As with most everything Ms. Ocasio-Cortez does, even the smallest details of her bartending stint invited an obsessive level of scrutiny and analysis. What was the symbolism of her choice of venue, a hip, newly opened spot with exposed wood beams and dangling pendant lighting? Was it a wink, some wondered, to the fact that Mr. Crowley had held his election night party there, dedicating a song to Ms. Ocasio-Cortez when she won? Did it unintentionally highlight that she had defeated Mr. Crowley by dominating gentrifying areas of Queens, despite losing some less white

50 neighborhoods? Some conservatives pointed out online that Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's former employers had recently closed their flagship restaurant, citing rising costs including the increased minimum wage.

55 But that punditry was far from the minds of the carefully curated audience at the restaurant on Friday. As they finished their cocktails and pizzas, and as the crowd thinned after Ms. Ocasio-Cortez's departure, they were still basking in the afterglow of their encounter. "She's a frickin' rock star," Ms. Ford said.

England's rebel spirit is rising – and it wants a no-deal Brexit

John Harris, *The Guardian*, Monday 21 January 2019

In my innocence, I didn't expect many people to be in a central Portsmouth Wetherspoons at 10.30am on a Friday morning. But there they all were, in their droves: passionate supporters of Brexit, there to hear the pub chain's founder and chairman, Tim Martin, make the case for Britain leaving the EU with no deal. Martin has been on the road since November, with the aim of visiting at least 100 of his boozers. The day we crossed paths, he was traversing the south coast, moving on to Southampton and Weymouth: given that it has whetted the appetite of what remains of the country's local press, drawn large crowds and shifted huge amounts of food and drink, the whole thing looks to have been an unlikely success.

Martin's case was unconvincing to the point of tedium: a half-argument that ignored what a no-deal Brexit would mean for British exports, and too blithely dismissed all those concerns about supply chains, and chaos at UK ports, let alone what a no-deal scenario would mean for the island of Ireland. But on the level of political sociology, the spectacle presented was compelling: the hardest of the Brexit hardcore, many of them on the pints and riled to snapping point before the speech even got going. [...]

Some support for no deal closely echoes the specious stuff repeatedly uttered by leading Brexiteers, about the EU needing Britain more than we need them, a country set free from Brussels diktats and trading again with its former colonies. But the most fascinating element of popular no-dealism is altogether more complicated, and built on a defiant rejection of all the warnings about falling off a cliff edge, so passionate that the refusal of advice feels more relevant to what people think than what the most reckless kind of Brexit actually might entail. In that sense, supporting no deal amounts to the same performative "fuck you" that defined a reasonable share of the original vote for leave.

The gender aspect of Brexit is still too overlooked. Of the people gathered in that Wetherspoons, 90% were men. In a recent YouGov poll, support for no deal was put at 22%, but whereas 28% of men were no-dealers, among women the figure was a paltry 16%. There is something at play here similar to the belligerent masculinity channelled by Donald Trump: a yearning for all-or-nothing politics, enemies and endless confrontation, and an aggressive nostalgia. Some of the latter is shamelessly misogynistic, part of a macho bigotry that harks back to hierarchies of privilege that linger on, and blurs into racism. But there is also an element that ought to attract empathy: a yearning for a world in which men were steelworkers, coalminers and welders, and a desperate quest for something – anything – that might allow their successors to do the same.

More widely, the politics of no deal betrays an urge for drama and crisis that a lot of us ought to be humble enough to recognise in ourselves. Not that long ago, a high-profile supporter of Jeremy Corbyn looked ahead to the new Labour Party taking power, and wondered: "Have we prepared the people who chanted for Jeremy at Glastonbury for the fact that, at some stage, they may only be able to withdraw 50 quid a day if the credit runs dry? If there is a very British coup, will they hold the streets?" A comparable romanticism surrounds the idea of a besieged post-Brexit Britain nobly trying to make its way without the interference of Brussels. It is, perhaps, one of the great failings of mainstream politics that it has been unable to project anything similar on to issues that cry out for public attention: imagine, for example, if people were as worked up about climate change.

Finally, there are questions about no-dealism that are bound up with England, and national traits that go back centuries. One is a tendency to indulge in futile, inexplicable gestures, evident in everything from 18th-century riots to 1970s punk rock, and perfectly summed up in a sentiment mewed by a young man named Johnny Rotten, in the midst of a hit single titled *Anarchy in the UK*: "Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it." These things explode from time to time, but what never seems to go away is the self-image of an island nation, the seductive myth of Britain standing alone, and an eternally mistrustful attitude to the EU, now intensified by the bloodless functionaries – Tusk, Barnier, Juncker – apparently calling the shots on Brexit.

At the moment, mainstream politics operates on the understanding that if no deal came to pass, queues of lorries and thinly stocked shops would spark no end of public outrage, and cause huge political damage to the Conservative party. But if the current procedural complexities surrounding Brexit eventually give way to much starker realities of what the EU calls a "disorderly withdrawal", I would not be so sure. Somewhere between the Wetherspoons spirit, a mass desire to simply get Brexit over with and the mirage of a wronged country fighting for survival, there might lie the key to why no-dealism is suddenly proving more popular than some people would like to imagine. A no-deal exit would confirm that politics has entered the realms of the darkly surreal, and that 23 June 2016 was only the start.

Jacob Rees-Mogg is wrong: the Tory party does have an Islamophobia problem

For years, the party has done next to nothing to stamp out prejudice in its ranks

Anoosh Chakelian, *The New Statesman*, March 5th 2019

Islamophobia is rife within the Conservative Party. Fourteen party members have been suspended today for Islamophobic Facebook comments, as uncovered by *BuzzFeed*. On the very same day, a council candidate in Harlow, Peter Lamb, resigned for racist comments, like his assertion in 2015 that "Islam is like alcoholism. The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem", revealed on *PoliticsHome*.

5 These incidents came after the Tories suspended a Wellingborough Conservative councillor Martyn York last week over a Facebook group he moderated that contained racist and Islamophobic messages.

For some reason, this has led the Conservative MP Jacob Rees-Mogg – the subject of one of the offending Facebook groups the "Jacob Rees-Mogg Supporters Group" – to champion his party's action. "Islamophobes have no place in the Tory party and it is encouraging that we have acted swiftly unlike the Socialists," he tweeted:

10 There are so many things wrong with this tweet that it's difficult to know where to start.

First, Rees-Mogg links to the *BuzzFeed* report – apparently not realising that Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ) only took action when the website had contacted them about the comments it uncovered. So no, that's not action – that's getting caught.

15 Second, Rees-Mogg appears to be using his own party's racism scandal to have a pop at the Labour Party's anti-Semitism problem, as if it's all some kind of fun bigotry competition that only matters when scoring political points. You can have two racism scandals. And you can have two racism scandals that are both dealt with appallingly.

Third, Rees-Mogg is simply wrong. Sayeeda Warsi, the Tory peer and former party chair who served as the first Muslim woman in cabinet in 2010-14, has been warning her party about its Islamophobia problem for years.

20 She resigned as foreign office minister from the cabinet in 2014 over what she called her party's "morally indefensible stance on Israel's actions in Gaza, and had been warning about Islamophobia in Britain long before then – making headline in 2011 by saying Islamophobia had "passed the dinner table test" in a speech to Leicester University as Conservative Party chair.

A year later, the Tories' election guru Lynton Crosby reportedly said Boris Johnson's London mayoral re-election campaign in 2012 shouldn't focus on winning votes from the "fucking Muslims".

25 Since Warsi quit the cabinet, she has been able to speak more freely about the problem in her own party. Naming ministers and strategists, she accused the Conservative Party of making the political calculation not to crack down on the problem in a revealing book on Muslim Britain, *The Enemy Within*, published in 2017. She also called on the government to rethinks its flawed anti-radicalisation Prevent programme. In June last year, she warned that Islamophobia was "very widespread in the party, and went "all the way to the top".

30 Although Warsi told me at the time she had sent advance copies of her book to Theresa May, the then home secretary Amber Rudd and other ministers, nothing has changed in the party's attitude towards the problem. Indeed, it has barely acknowledged it – other than to expel a few members when the press sniffed them out.

35 It allowed former London mayoral candidate Zac Goldsmith's divide-and-rule election campaign in 2016, which attempted to whip up negativity about Muslims in other Asian areas of London, and only last year a Romford Conservatives campaign leaflet distributed in Havering was accused even by Tory figures of "racist signalling" (it referred to "Mayor Khan" and warned of the borough "resembling" neighbouring "inner-city" areas and "our cherished union jack flag being taken down"). It was later withdrawn.

40 No action has been taken by the party against Bob Blackman MP, who shared an Islamophobic post on his Facebook page last March, entitled "Muslim Somali sex gang say raping white British children 'part of their culture' " (he later took it down, calling it an "error"), and was soon after found by *Vice* to be a member of far-right and Islamophobic Facebook groups (which he removed himself from, saying he was "completely unaware" of their content). He also has past form that has also been ignored by the party.

45 The Muslim Council of Britain officially called for an inquiry into Islamophobia in the Tory Party last May, citing a pattern of over ten Islamophobic occurrences from Tory candidates or representatives from 2018 alone – and its calls have gone unheeded, despite being renewed.

If this is "swift" action, perhaps Rees-Mogg needs to repair his pocket watch.

The Return of Mr Brexit, Nigel Farage

Bagehot, 18 May 2019 | *The Economist*

He has never held a seat in the House of Commons, let alone a seat around the cabinet table. Yet Nigel Farage is one of the most important British politicians of the past few decades. History will have little to say about many members of Theresa May's under-achieving government. But it will have a great deal to say, whether good or bad, about this former commodities trader turned champion of the populist revolution.

- 5 Mr Farage has changed the course of British history once and may be about to change it again. He persuaded David Cameron to call a referendum on membership of the EU, by turning the obscure UK Independence Party into a powerful electoral machine that hoovered up discontented Tory voters. Now he is trying to force Mrs May to "deliver on" that referendum by demanding that Britain leave with no deal. His brand-new Brexit Party is likely to win more votes than any other in next week's European election and send an electric shock through the political establishment.
- 10 As you might expect, the leader of the Brexit Party is a very British—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say a very English—figure. He is part city-slicker and part pub-philosopher, usually wearing pinstripe suits and a tie but also fond of propping up the bar with a pint of ale in front of him. (It is a measure of how seriously he is taking the current election that he is currently off the beer.) He litters his conversation with Basil Fawlty-style references to the second world war, and has said his greatest regret is not having taken part in D-Day.
- 15 But this English figure is drawing on powerful global forces, which are eroding the foundations of the liberal order that was founded after the war and rejuvenated by free-marketeers in the 1980s. Mr Farage is much more aware of the global dimension of what he is doing than many of the supposed "citizens of nowhere" whom he is tormenting. During his almost 20 years as an MEP he has cultivated deep connections with right-wing populists across Europe. He was the first British politician to visit Donald Trump after the 2016 presidential election and he is greeted at CPAC, a gathering of American conservatives, as a conquering hero. "The Brink", a new film about Steve Bannon, Mr Trump's former campaign manager, shows Mr Farage taking part in a meeting with Mr Bannon and various European populists, some of them distinctly unsavoury, to discuss forming a sort of anti-Davos popular front.
- 20 The most powerful of these global forces is, somewhat paradoxically, nationalism. The past decade has seen a revolt against the world-is-flat globalism that was all the rage at the turn of the century, a revolt that has swept overtly nationalist governments to power in America, Brazil, Hungary and Poland, to name only the most obvious. The second force is resentment against the remote elites who have exploited the upside of globalisation while cunningly protecting themselves against the downside. They include borderless bankers who suddenly rediscover the importance of nation-states when it comes to bailing out their banks, and international networkers who, in the words of Thierry Baudet, a hot new populist in the Netherlands, are forever "failing upwards".
- 25 Britain is particularly exposed to these global forces. It is one of the few European countries whose national pride was burnished rather than tarnished by the second world war. As such it was always going to be a misfit in a European club designed by France and Germany. A distinctive sense of Englishness has been gathering strength for years, partly in response to Scottish nationalism. Britain's liberal economic model has also generated mounting resentment, both because it left swathes of the country behind and because the financial crisis produced a decade of stagnant wages.
- 30 Mr Farage has woven this combination of pride and resentment into a compelling anti-establishment narrative. Brussels bureaucrats are intent on turning an enterprising nation into a vassal of the European super-state, he says, and the British establishment is too craven and corrupt to see what is happening. [...]

Mr Farage's success signals the rise of a new sort of politics, which puts the will of the people before the judgment of MPs, and which emphasises questions of identity rather than technocratic problem-solving. Mr Farage may never succeed in his lifelong ambition of winning a seat in Parliament. But by keeping questions of identity at the centre of politics, he will succeed in his bigger aim of consuming the age of bland compromise with an age of fiery populism.

The Lib Dems' 'Bollocks to Brexit' is crass, but it might just work

The party of moderation has found a novel, if slightly risky, way to tap into how remainers feel about Brexit
Stefan Stern, *The Guardian* 9 May 2019

"When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer," wrote George Orwell in his famous essay, *Politics and the English Language*, just after the second world war. Things are bad, and our language is getting worse.

The Liberal Democrats have adopted the slogan "Bollocks to Brexit" in their campaign for the on again, never really off European elections on 23 May. This has certainly won them some attention. Critics were quick to denounce what they saw as a sorry decline in standards of taste and decency. James Forsyth, political editor of the *Spectator* – and a columnist for the *Sun* – tweeted that the slogan "does nothing for civility and makes the public square a less pleasant place". He acknowledged there was a chance he might sound a bit prim in offering this view.

How do we all feel about "bollocks"? It's not the rudest word you can imagine using. For the purposes of sloganising in the run-up to polling day, the alliteration with the b of Brexit is useful. It's also an old, familiar and decidedly British term. (For foreigners and non-native English speakers, the Bloomberg news service helpfully reported: "Perhaps an unfamiliar term outside of the UK, 'bollocks' is a slang word meaning both rubbish and testicles.")

But does this usage constitute an unnecessary and perhaps even counter-productive coarsening of public debate? Not every Lib Dem candidate will have to use the phrase. Other election literature will carry the less charged wording, "Stop Brexit", for those activists worried about causing offence. Broadcasters will have to exercise judgment in how freely to report the slogan. A YouGov survey in 2010 found that 67% felt "bollocks" should only be used after the 9 o'clock watershed. Only one in five thought it should be allowed at any time; 12% thought it should be banned.

The colourful language has at least marked out the Lib Dems as a party with a bit of fight in them. On the back of encouraging results in the local elections, Vince Cable's team has recovered some energy and momentum. The contrast with the less distinct and at times rather confused-sounding interventions of Change UK – who also want to stop Brexit, but without swearing – is stark. In addition, the slogan has the virtue of sincerity. The Lib Dems are unequivocal remainers who want to stop Brexit from happening. They think it's all bollocks and are prepared to say so.

Direct language can be effective. Matt Kelly, editor of the *New European* newspaper, tells me that since offering new subscribers a free "Bollocks to Brexit" mug if they sign up to receive the paper, subscription rates have trebled.

Words are among the first casualties at election time. A leaflet from the Brexit party came through my door this week which declared that they want to put "the principles of Trust, Honesty and Integrity at the heart of our democracy" These words stood next to a photograph of Nigel Farage. What a load of bollocks.

Few of us want our political debate to slip into rampant obscenity. Shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry has managed to demurely mouth the word "bollocks" both in the chamber of the House of Commons and on TV – an acknowledgement that if swear words are to retain their power we should handle them with care and ration their use. It would be an ironic success for Trumpian demagogues if coarseness were to become normal. Politicians should be helping to restore our wounded civilisation, not taking a hammer to it.

But perhaps this blast of slightly off-colour humour will improve matters. Largely because of Brexit, politics has become boring, stale and repetitive. We need something to wake us all up. The flatness of so much political language – the safety first, pre-cooked soundbites – doesn't help. This is not an entirely new phenomenon, however. In his essay, Orwell bemoaned how uninspiring so many political speakers could be. "When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases," he wrote, "one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy ... A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine."

Rage against the machine. Bollocks to Brexit.

Billionaire pledges to pay student debt for 2019 class at historic black US college by Martin Pengelly, *The Guardian*, May 19th 2019.

Delivering the commencement address at Morehouse College in Atlanta, the alma mater of Martin Luther King Jr, the billionaire technology investor and philanthropist Robert F Smith made a surprise announcement: his family would wipe out the student debt of the entire class of 2019.

5 Smith's words to nearly 400 graduating seniors were greeted with a moment of stunned silence, then, unsurprisingly, the biggest cheers of the morning.

"On behalf of the eight generations of my family that have been in this country, we're gonna put a little fuel in your bus," Smith said. "This is my class, 2019. And my family is making a grant to eliminate their student loans." According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, he added: "I know my class will pay this forward."

10 Smith, who received an honorary doctorate in the ceremony, had already announced a \$1.5m gift to the college. The Journal-Constitution reported that the pledge to eliminate student debt for the 2019 class was estimated at \$40m.

Aaron Mitchom, a 22-year-old finance major, told the Associated Press he had drawn up a spreadsheet to calculate how long it would take him to pay back \$200,000 in student loans. It came to 25 years at half his monthly salary, he said. In an instant, that number vanished. Mitchom wept.

15 "I can delete that spreadsheet," he said. "I don't have to live off of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. I was shocked. My heart dropped. We all cried. In the moment it was like a burden had been taken off."

His mother, Tina Mitchom, was also shocked. Eight family members, she said, including Mitchom's 76-year-old grandmother, took turns over four years co-signing on the loans that got their student across the finish line.

20 "It takes a village," she said. "It now means he can start paying it forward and start closing this gap a lot sooner, giving back to the college and thinking about a succession plan" for his younger siblings.

Unpaid student debt, which last year stood at \$1.5tn, has become a major national problem. Under Trump appointee Betsy DeVos, however, the federal education department has been found to have rejected 99% of applications for student debt forgiveness.

25 The issue has duly become a point of contention in the Democratic presidential primary. Last month, the Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren won widespread praise when she published a plan to cancel much student debt and make public college free, funded by a tax on the super rich.

30 Subject to a distinction between commitments to tuition-free college and debt-free college, Warren is not alone in focusing on the cost of further education. The Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, for example, pursued it in 2016 and is doing so again this year.

Among other candidates, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York has said she will allow students to refinance debt at a lower interest rate while Kamala Harris of California told a CNN town hall "we need a ... commitment to debt-free college, which I support".

35 Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana, has released a proposal to make college debt-free for low-income students. It read in part: "Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) are vital for this country and our communities and deserve to receive more dedicated support." Morehouse is an all-male HBCU. Smith, who is African American, is an engineer by training who has also donated to Cornell University in New York. He also studied at Columbia.

40 As founder and chief executive of Vista Equity Partners, a private equity firm that invests in software, data and technology driven companies, he placed 355th on the 2019 Forbes list of richest Americans.

Morehouse president David A Thomas told the AP Smith's gift would have a profound effect.

"Many of my students," he said, "are interested in going into teaching, for example, but leave with an amount of student debt that makes that untenable. In some ways, it was a liberation gift for these young men that just opened up their choices."

45 The Journal-Constitution quoted Tonga Releford, a Morehouse class of 2019 parent, as saying her son's student loans totalled about \$70,000.

"I feel like it's Mother's Day all over again," she said.

Her husband, Charles Releford II, also a Morehouse graduate, said their younger son was a junior.

"Maybe [Smith] will come back next year," he said.

Feel no pity for Theresa May. She has been the worst prime minister in modern times

Owen Jones, *The Guardian*, Friday 24th May 2019

Spare me the inevitable pity for Theresa May after her tearful farewell address this morning. "Oh, wasn't she given such a terrible hand!", people might cry, or "is it her fault that her backbenchers are such a bunch of Neanderthal extremists?" and "it's not her fault Brexit is such an undeliverable mess, is it?". We must see through this. May is the worst prime minister – on their own terms – since Lord North's reign in the late 18th century, when the US colonies declared their independence.

May did indeed inherit a terrible hand. She then proceeded to douse it liberally with petrol and set it alight.

Let's start with Brexit. The official leave campaigns, and their vitriol about migrants and refugees, merely built on the foundations laid by a home secretary who sent "go home" vans around mixed communities, who spread pernicious myths of being unable to deport illegal migrants because they owned a pet cat, and under whose watch gay refugees felt obliged to film themselves having sex to avoid deportation. There is only one discernible consistency in May's ideology – and that is bashing migrants.

When she became prime minister, May and her coterie of advisers – defined by a swagger and bravado that would swiftly become hubris – hungrily set their eyes on devouring Ukip's voting tally in the 2015 election in order to hand the Tories the landslide victory they'd been denied for three decades. "No deal is better than a bad deal," became her defining mantra, raising expectations to impossible levels and conferring respectability, desirability even, on a disastrous Brexit outcome: the chutzpah, then, of quoting Nicholas Winton when he said, "compromise is not a dirty word", in her farewell speech.

Her allies in the media set about monsterring her opponents, poisoning the well of political discourse: the notorious "ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE" Daily Mail front page was penned by James Slack, who promptly became her press secretary. The May premiership will be remembered for creating an environment where terms like "traitor" and "saboteur" became commonplace. She, too, deliberately stoked a culture war that threatens to consume Britain, most notoriously in her demagogic "If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere," speech. She appointed Boris Johnson as foreign secretary, antagonising the EU states with whom she needed to strike a deal and reducing Britain further to the status of a laughing stock.

For purely domestic partisan gain, she repeatedly made inflammatory speeches about the EU that achieved nothing but fostered bad will. Her chancellor, Philip Hammond, made threats that if Britain did not get what it wanted, the government would undercut the EU in a race to the bottom of tax cuts and deregulation. This was not just a commitment to repeal the hard-won rights and freedoms of the British people, but a near declaration of war on what are supposed to be Britain's partners. But whatever her demagoguery, whatever her laughable empty platitudes of a "red, white and blue Brexit", May had no meaningful plan at all, other than undeliverable red lines. She couldn't negotiate a deal with her own party, let alone with 27 foreign governments.

Holding back tears, May ended her speech describing "the enormous and enduring gratitude to have had the opportunity to serve the country I love", but her real commitment was only to her party. She promised over and over again that she would not call a general election, but believing she had the opportunity to obliterate her opposition and turn Britain into a de facto one-party state, she broke her word. Deceit and dishonesty were the hallmarks of her doomed reign. When the Tories had their majority snatched away, May became a zombie prime minister: sadly, as any avid watcher of the genre can testify, zombies can cause a lot of damage, and are very hard to dispose of.

Having hyped up "no deal is better than a bad deal", May led Britain to the entirely predictable humiliation of a bad deal. That her party's zealots increasingly embraced pushing Britain off the precipice was unsurprising: she kept throwing them red meat, and they had only grown fatter and hungrier.

[...] The only leeway I will give May is this. With Britain in turmoil, it will be so easy for the Tory party to claim this is all or her; to treat her as a human sponge, soaking up all the blame. But to paraphrase George Osborne – himself one of the chief architects of the chaos of our time – they are all in this together. They all imposed cuts that ripped up our social infrastructure and fuelled discontent and anger. They all whipped up resentment against migrants for the "burning injustices" they, and their party's wealthy bankrollers, were responsible for. They all promoted an ideology which prioritises markets ahead of human needs and aspirations.

The May era was a time of chaos; but something worse now beckons. Until Britain is rid of being ruled by a disintegrating Tory party – the proximate cause of our ills – and a rotten social order that decays further with every passing day, the turmoil will not only continue but deepen. What a legacy to leave.

The \$70,000-a-Year Minimum Wage, by Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*, March 30th, 2019.

SEATTLE — Staff members gasped four years ago when Dan Price gathered the 120 employees at Gravity Payments, the company he had founded with his brother, and told them he was raising everyone's salary to a minimum of \$70,000, partly by slashing his own \$1.1 million pay to the same level.

5 The news went viral and provoked a national debate about whether efficient capitalism could have a heart. Some Americans lauded Price for treating employees with dignity. However, on Fox Business he was labeled the "lunatic of all lunatics," and Rush Limbaugh declared, "I hope this company is a case study in M.B.A. programs on how socialism does not work, because it's going to fail."

So I came to Seattle to see what had unfolded: Did Gravity succeed or crash?

10 There were bumps, no doubt about it. A couple of important employees quit, apparently feeling less valued when new hires were close to them in pay. The publicity forced Gravity, which processes credit card payments for small businesses, to hire additional people to handle a deluge of inquiries. Worst of all, Price's brother, who owned a stake in the company, sued and alleged that Price hadn't consulted him on decisions.

For a while, it wasn't clear that the gamble was going to pay off.

15 But eventually it did: Business has surged, and profits are higher than ever. Gravity last year processed \$10.2 billion in payments, more than double the \$3.8 billion in 2014, before the announcement. It has grown to 200 employees, all nonunion.

The pay raise also helped attract new employees — including some who yearned to join a company with values. Tammi Kroll, a Yahoo executive, took an 80 percent pay cut to move to Gravity, where she is now chief operating officer.

20 "My whole goal when I went to school was to make more money," said Kroll, who comes from a working-class background. But as she rose in the corporate world and her taxable income topped \$1 million, she had an epiphany: "Money doesn't make you happy, doesn't make you a better person."

When she heard about Gravity, her heart leapt — and so did she.

25 Entry-level employees benefited hugely from Price's decision to raise the minimum wage. Seattle housing is expensive, so many residents had been unable to buy homes or start families. Maggie Goodall, 23, had been making \$42,000 a year and couldn't afford the \$400 round-trip airfare to visit her home in Arkansas. After joining Gravity in September, with a \$70,000-a-year salary, she was able to go to see her family again.

30 That's the kind of thing Price says he was aiming for. He grew up in rural Idaho in an intensely Christian family and spent three hours a day listening to Limbaugh and two hours memorizing Scripture. He's less religious today, but he says ethics remain deeply important to him.

His brother's lawsuit was dismissed, and Price bought him out. So Price now owns 100 percent of Gravity, giving him flexibility to do as he wants. The question remains whether raising pay so much would also be a good move for public companies answerable to shareholders.

35 "For Gravity, it's worked out great, and I think this type of behavior on balance would work out great for every single company in the world," Price told me. In the next breath, though, he acknowledged doubts about whether this would work everywhere.

It's reasonable to be skeptical about how scalable this is. Price enjoyed publicity and new customers by being the first to go to \$70,000; those benefits will not accrue to followers.

40 Jody Hall, a good liberal who worries about income inequality, owns a nearby cafe, Cupcake Royale. She chooses Gravity to process her payments, admires what Price has done and offers her own employees health care.

Yet she said that in the restaurant business, "the model would not nearly work." Indeed, she worries that Seattle's increase in the minimum wage to \$15 will hurt small businesses like hers and may cost some jobs.

45 Still, one can believe that Price's model is not fully scalable and also that it's a powerful example showing that companies need not treat staff as serfs.

There is now a broad recognition that American capitalism is flawed — see Steven Pearlstein's superb book "Can American Capitalism Survive?" — and our next step is to figure out how to move beyond blind rapacity. Price seems part of that national rethink.

50 The gasps when Price announced his \$70,000 initiative were echoed in 2016 by his own, after grateful employees led him to the parking lot and presented him with a new Tesla that they had all chipped in to buy, replacing his ratty old car.

That's probably not scalable, either. But Gravity shows that at least for some companies in some industries, it is possible to thrive while treating even the lowest-level workers with dignity. And that's not the death of capitalism but perhaps part of its rebirth.

Compassion or Hard Brexit: The choice facing Britain's Tories

Robert Shrimmsley, *The Financial Times*, 15 October 2018

It may, of course, just be coincidence, but you cannot help noticing that the most devoted champions of universal credit (UC), the UK's big bang welfare reform, are also the most dedicated Brexiters. There was always a touch of the "with one bound we were free" mentality about both ideas. It is the allure of the deceptively simple. There are arguments to be made for UC, but the implementation has been hopeless.

5 Again, one can see the Brexit crossover. It just needs to get past the tricky implementation stage. We cannot let a few obstacles stop us. Great British ingenuity will iron out the details. There may be trouble ahead, but while there's music and moonlight . . .

This is not to suggest that grandiose ideas are the exclusive preserve of rightwing anti-Europeans. Until recently, the big bold bang school of politics belonged more to the left and also to pro-Europeans. Until Thatcherism, major upheaval used not to be a very Conservative thing. One also has to allow that some grand visions turn out to be good ones; the National Health Service is Britain's best loved example. These are exceptions. Mostly, there is a lot to be said for dull, incremental advances.

The case for UC is not terrible. Its creator, Iain Duncan Smith, welfare secretary under former prime minister David Cameron, argued as early as 2009 that the system of multiple benefits was complex and off-putting and that
15 disincentive led to entirely workless families. New incentives to work for even a few hours would encourage good habits and set claimants on a path to more, he said. This is not an absurd idea, although it is not clear the system was in such a mess as to require so comprehensive a shake-up of in-work benefits.

So UC was born; six benefits rolled into one. This was a reform entirely motivated by good intentions — truly compassionate Conservatism. Even better, its success would cut welfare bills. Eight million people will ultimately
20 receive this benefit, which ought to be incentive enough to get the detail right. Instead, it was beset by IT and other failings. It is badly behind schedule — even at best estimates it will have taken at least a decade. It is also unlikely ever to reap the promised cost savings. The financial crash meant that reform was introduced in an era of austerity. George Osborne, the former chancellor, used the unrealised and illusory efficiency savings to cut £12bn from the welfare bill. Only £3bn of this was a direct hit on the funding for UC, but the scheduled unification means much of
25 the £12bn will fall on the new benefit. This led to the first crisis as payment delays left people without support for up to six weeks. Even with transitional payments, 20 per cent are not getting their money on time — and 7m are still to migrate to UC.

More importantly, the savings undercut a basic principle of the reform by forcing a cut in the hours people can work before they start to lose benefit. Studies suggest up to 2m people could lose about £48 a week. The figures are
30 aggregate — but that is a heck of a lot to anyone on UC. No one moving to the new benefit will be worse off on day one, but they will lose cash if any of their circumstances change.

Some Tory spending hawks want to see the welfare bill cut. They see in-work benefits as state subsidies for low pay and believe people can live too well on them. The political problem with this view — leaving aside the moral one — is that in-work benefits now reach a significant percentage of the population and these people cannot be dismissed
35 as the "shirkers" of Tory mythology. Many are the very hard-pressed working families prime minister Theresa May has pledged to help. These are people whose votes the Tories need for power, so chancellor Philip Hammond will be forced to find the additional money.

All of which leads to the final point. Grand projects cannot exist in a vacuum. Both universal credit and the Osborne cuts predated Brexit. But a scheme the size of UC ought to be the biggest project on the government's books. Right
40 now it is not even close. The prime minister has promised an end to austerity. Conservatives are loudly willing to end without the means. It is hard enough for the chancellor to salvage UC, hold down taxes and eliminate the deficit in any climate; all but impossible in the teeth of a Brexit-induced recession. Yet those making the loudest demand on the chancellor are often, though not only, the same ones advocating the hardest of Brexits. Money may not buy everything, but it is if you haven't got it. Ideas are only ever as good as their implementation. It is a curious kind of
45 compassion which tries to alleviate poverty while insisting on a course which may well deny the nation the funds to turn that ambition into reality.



Would Congress Care More if Parkland Had Been a Plane Crash? by Jaclyn Corin, *The New York Times*, Feb. 13th, 2019.

Seventeen of my classmates and teachers died in the Parkland shooting, yet lawmakers still drag their feet on controlling guns.

5 PARKLAND, Fla. — When I arrived at school on Feb. 14, 2018, like any junior, I was mostly caught up in Valentine's Day chatter and events. But that all changed in the space of a few minutes that afternoon when a gunman opened fire on my classmates and my teachers, killing 17 of them and injuring just as many.

10 Despite the countless tragedies you see on TV, nothing prepares you for the day it happens to your community. The familiar images of students fleeing their school as SWAT teams entered, of parents waiting by the perimeter desperately praying to get their kids back, were now my reality. They were my classmates and friends, too many of whom never came home.

15 After the shooting, my friends at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and I decided we couldn't sit by as school shootings and gun violence became a normal part of life in America. We were determined to turn an act of violence into a movement, to do everything we could to send a powerful message to the country and to Washington.

There's not a day that goes by that I'm not reminded of the shooting. When I hear the sound of sirens or fireworks, I'm taken back to that horrific afternoon. For me, Valentine's Day will now forever be a reminder of loss.

20 Yet our community isn't alone in its tragedy. In 2017, nearly 40,000 Americans died as a result of guns, an average of 109 people a day. And according to a tally from Education Week, there were 24 school shootings that resulted in gun-related deaths or injuries in 2018 alone.

While several states have taken positive legislative measures in response, there have been zero bipartisan investigations or new laws from Congress.

Not a single federal law has been passed since the Sandy Hook massacre in 2012 to address the crisis of school shootings. This year could be different — but only if we organize and insist on it.

25 Last week, Congress held its first hearing on gun violence prevention since 2011. This week, the House Judiciary Committee is poised to approve a bipartisan bill to requiring background checks for all gun purchases, a proposal that represents one important step toward keeping deadly firearms out of the wrong hands. However, it's also likely this bill won't get a hearing, let alone a vote, in the Senate.

30 That chamber's majority leader, Mitch McConnell, needs to explain to all of us who have survived a shooting or lost someone to gun violence why the Senate won't even vote on such a bill even though there's been over half a million gun deaths since 2000, the year I was born.

And Americans should truly reckon with why this epidemic of gun deaths is treated so differently from any other health crisis in our country.

35 Imagine for a moment that all these gun deaths were caused by something else widely feared: airplane crashes. There's no universe in which we wouldn't see it as a national emergency worthy of our undivided attention.

40 In fact, 2017 was a remarkable year in aviation. No one died in a commercial airplane crash, meaning it was safer for me to fly than it was for me to go to high school. It would take hundreds of completely full Boeing 737 flights crashing without survivors to total the number of people who died by guns in America in just 2017. If even a handful of such crashes occurred, the government would declare a national emergency. All 737s would be grounded, there would be an independent commission created to investigate the crisis, and Boeing would be called before Congress to answer for its failures.

So why then don't more than 30,000 gun deaths in a year rise to the level of a national crisis for America's conservative leaders?

45 The past year has been one with the deepest of lows and, at times, the highest of highs — moments when the hope that springs from fighting for a better world makes anything feel possible. On Thursday, the anniversary of the shooting, I will be in the only place that matters, nestled in my community and with my family.

And for the next four days, the organization I helped found, March For Our Lives, will go dark to honor those we lost and their memory.

50 I am deeply proud of all that my friends and I have accomplished in the last year. Still, I can't help but wonder why so many lawmakers are ignoring — and, at their worst, enabling — the horrific gun deaths that occur in our country each day.

Florida Moves Toward Arming Teachers, Despite Opposition From Parkland Students, by Patricia Mazzei, *The New York Times*, April 23rd, 2019.

MIAMI — A year ago, in the wake of horrific tragedy, Florida lawmakers reached a compromise that had once seemed politically impossible: They passed an array of gun restrictions after a young man killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

5 Part of that compromise allowed certain school employees, but not classroom teachers, to carry firearms on campus. Then, late last year, a state commission investigating the Parkland shooting came to a conclusion that made even some of its members uncomfortable: Some of the deaths at Stoneman Douglas High might have been prevented if faculty inside the building had been armed.

10 Based on that conclusion, state lawmakers are now poised to lift Florida's ban on arming classroom teachers, allowing them to receive the same voluntary training as other staff to carry weapons in school. On Tuesday, the State Senate approved the change, which now heads to the more conservative State House for what is expected to be final passage. Some parents and students from Parkland who have become activists against gun violence are steadfastly opposed to the change. They traveled to the State Capitol in Tallahassee in recent weeks to protest against the expansion of the so-called school guardian program, saying more guns on campus would put children in more danger. The National Rifle Association has sought to arm Florida teachers for years.

15 About 150 students with the March for Our Lives movement descended on the Capitol in buses earlier this month; they forced a delay in a House hearing — but no more. There was no similar demonstration against the legislation when the Senate took it up on Tuesday.

20 Still, the vote proved wrenching for the state senator perhaps most closely associated with Parkland. Senator Lauren Book, a Democrat from the city of Plantation, near Parkland, sat on the state commission investigating the school shooting and favored the recommendation that districts allow teachers to be armed.

But, through tears, she said she could not vote for the provision on the Senate floor, citing the intense opposition from the Parkland community. She called the vote "exceedingly painful."

25 "I'm a mom who recently began dropping my own kids off at school. I always figured I'd tear up because of how sweet and cute they were," Ms. Book said, adding, "I never imagined tears streaming down my face because I'm afraid of what might happen to them while in school."

Ms. Book praised the other provisions in the legislation, which included an array of recommendations made by the state commission that investigated the shooting, including changes related to monitoring threats and providing mental health services for students.

30 The 22-17 Senate vote fell almost entirely along party lines, with a single Republican, Senator Anitere Flores of Miami, joining all of the chamber's Democrats in voting against the bill.

Max Schachter, who lost his 14-year-old son, Alex, in the Parkland shooting, was the only member of the state commission who opposed arming teachers. On Tuesday, he said that he nevertheless wanted to see the other safety measures in the bill adopted.

35 "I did not want those issues to wait another year to get a perfect bill," he said. "I don't think our children can wait." One of the students who campaigned against the provision was Sari Kaufman, 16, a junior at Stoneman Douglas High who wrote an op-ed in *The Sun Sentinel* of South Florida questioning how arming teachers would make students safe. Her classmates were worried, she said.

40 "Having this bill pass could lead to an unhealthy environment," she said.

Last year, perhaps the most significant opposition to arming teachers came from former Gov. Rick Scott, a Republican who is now in the United States Senate. The new governor, Ron DeSantis, also a Republican, said in January that he generally favored arming some school personnel, as long as they volunteered and received training. The guardian program in Florida requires local sheriffs to screen and train participants.

45 Of the state's 67 school districts, 25 have established a guardian program, including the district in Broward County, which includes Parkland. School board members there joined the program reluctantly, saying it was the only way for them to comply with a state requirement adopted after the shooting last year that every campus have armed security. Among the chief concerns for lawmakers from Florida cities was that minority students in areas plagued with gun violence would feel unsafe in schools with armed teachers. In contrast, lawmakers from rural areas said arming staff added a layer of security to schools located far from law enforcement.

50 "Who is first during that first three minutes is key — somebody who could respond," said Senator Dennis K. Baxley, a Republican from Ocala who supported the legislation.

In Parkland, the shooting suspect killed 17 people in less than six minutes. The only armed person on campus, a sheriff's deputy, stood outside the building while the massacre took place. He did not go in.

Why the Independent Group is the antithesis of democracy

Lea Ypi, *The New Statesman*, 22 February 2019

Modern democracy, political scientists often say, would be inconceivable if it were not for party government. If this is true, then a new political party might offer solutions when democracy is in crisis. The Independent Group sees itself as a fresh political force disrupting the way old politics works. It wants to occupy a space in the centre that traditional party divides have left empty. It urges people to make change happen.

5 But the Independent Group is not your standard political party. It has no manifesto, no popular base, no memory of struggles, victories or defeats. Rather than a movement in search of political representation, it is a group of elected representatives in search of a movement.

Elections are one of the most important moments in which a political group consolidates its principles, popular support and identity. But TIG appears uninterested in elections. [...]

0 For radical democrats like Rousseau and Marx, the purpose of democratic politics was always to ensure that powerful people were kept in check by the masses. A number of measures emerged from this intellectual tradition: mass membership in political organisations, mandatory reselection, mechanisms to deselect MPs, rotation in office, and so on. This is what political theorists call "the delegate" model of representation.

5 The Labour Party's expanded membership and moves to change the relationship between members and MPs, such as making deselections easier to achieve, reflect this delegate model. According to this view, MPs are only one of the links in the chain of democratic participation. They are by no means the most important one. Every MP must remain accountable to party members each step of the way.

Labour Party leaders are often accused of authoritarianism. But if Labour really had been in the business of silencing criticism and undermining democracy, it would have discouraged rather than promoted the delegate model. The current 0 Labour Party may have many flaws, but a lack of commitment to democracy is not one of them.

The same cannot be said about the Independent Group. Its refusal to fight by-elections signals its alignment to a very different tradition of thinking about the relationship between citizens and politicians. Members of TIG insist that there is no reason to subject their views to democratic scrutiny since their values have not changed.

5 But even if that were true, MPs are not selected only for the values they embrace, but also for how they interpret those values in public life, and for the policies they generate. Its initial statement of values spoke of pursuing "policies that are evidence based, not led by ideology". The institutions that work best are, as in the TIG's statement of values, those where "well-regulated private enterprise can reward aspiration and drive economic progress". Disagreements of principle are reducible to disagreements of policy. This is the essence of centrist politics.

0 TIG's opposition to by-elections arises from a political ideal where MPs retain independence from their constituents. This is often called the "trustees'" model of representation. It emerged historically from attempts to isolate politicians from the power of the many, from thinkers including Emmanuel Sieyès, Benjamin Constant and James Madison.

5 The trustees' version of democracy views the masses as dangerous and democracy as easily manipulated. Political institutions are authorised by the masses but remain isolated from them. According to this model of politics, once representatives are selected, their relationship with citizens is essentially a fiduciary one, like that between a customer and their bank manager. Once money is in the bank, you trust the bank managers to do their job. Once elections are over, you trust politicians to represent the people. Once you make a donation or fund someone's electoral campaign, they will look after your interests. The more you pay, the better you will be served. While this model dominates the electoral systems and political institutions of Western liberal democracies, the divide between professional politicians and ordinary people that it invokes helps explain why, as TIG puts it, "politics is broken".

0 Like its moderate ancestors in the 18th and 19th century, TIG is a creation of parliament rather than mass publics or social movements. Instead of offering genuine change, it resurrects a problematic past, displaying the same contempt for ordinary people and the same distrust of democracy as centrist politics in the 18th and 19th century.

5 Change is needed, but it will not emerge from a group of professional politicians whose democratic antipathies run so deep that they oppose by-elections. To revive democracy we must depart from the trustee model of representation and consolidate radical democracy. .

Snobs and mobs agree on the cost of a second referendum

Nick Cohen, *The Spectator*, 26 January 2019

Britain moved a step close to Weimar yesterday when the Prime Minister used the threat of terrorism to get her way. Being a conservative woman of the upper-middle class, Theresa May did not precisely mimic the cries of 'there will be blood' that come from the right's more deranged corners. You don't talk like that if you want to get on in Thames Valley society. Rather the Prime Minister issued her warning in the careful language of a bureaucrat. 5 'There has not yet been enough recognition of the way that a second referendum could damage social cohesion by undermining faith in our democracy,' she said. You would have missed her intent behind this seemingly bland statement unless you had been paying attention to the noise that surrounds her.

It is now standard to suggest that holding a second referendum will provoke violence, and that the violence will be justifiable. Indeed, even the act of challenging a hard Brexit and asking for a second referendum is enough for 0 the right to predict, in voices dripping in insincerity, that visits from hard men in leather jackets will follow.

[...] Let us stand back. A neo-Nazi murdered Jo Cox before the 2016 referendum. Should we have said at the time that campaigning to keep Britain in the European Union provokes justifiable vengeance? Soubry, Dominic Grieve and many other MPs receive death threats, sometimes for advocating remain, sometimes merely for arguing against the catastrophe of a crash-out. How serious the promises of murder are, it is impossible to say: by 5 definition, killers don't become killers until they kill. But death threats are more than the usual 'rough and tumble of politics'.

Of course, they utter the usual throat clearings and back coverings, but nowhere do we see Johnson, Rees Mogg, Farage and Banks telling their supporters to back off and shut up.

I won't go on about the absurdity of arguing that giving 'the people' a second say on Brexit is an attempt to subvert 10 'the people's will.' But instead make the wider point that predications of violent retribution against remainers are everywhere. As the Prime Minister's euphemisms showed, to pick on O'Neill, Montgomerie and other random examples, is to miss how accepted the argument has become. Listen to mainstream broadcasters, and they too take it as a plausible point of view that there will be violence in the streets, and never ask the obvious questions about culpability.

15 Older readers will remember that the Conservatives once claimed to be the party of law and order. When confronted with a hijacking or Islamist attack, they were the first to cry that 'we must never give in to terrorism'.

Now the snobs are uniting with the mobs. If they are not actually calling for violence, they are expecting it, justifying it, hoping for it, and *wanting* it. We should limit our democratic scope of action, they say, and restrict our choices because of the fear of a terrorism they anticipate with a revealing eagerness. I want to emphasise they 30 are asking us to act on fear. The 'civil discontent' and 'riots in streets' they say challenges to Brexit will bring are their projections into the future rather than a reality we see around us.

The far left, and indeed large parts of the liberal mainstream, came to accept in the 2000s that the 'root cause' of Islamist terrorism was not religious millenarianism but the Afghan and Iraq wars, or inner city deprivation, or the legacy of colonialism. Conveniently these were all causes they opposed, and would have opposed if no bombs had 35 exploded on the London Underground or in Parisian cafes. They did not care to think that by explaining away religious hatred as the product of rational secular causes, they were conscripting jihadis to their political project; saying that, unless Britain withdrew its troops from Iraq or tackled racism and poverty, it would pay the price in blood.

Now the right is trying far left tactics. And once again, the credulous mainstream is giving the indulgers of violence 40 too easy a ride. Its partisans oppose staying in the EU or the single market, and would oppose it if there was no blood in the streets. But if blood comes, or if it can be imagined, then the right is quite happy to conscript men of violence under its banner. As no less an authority than the Prime Minister has told us: challenge Brexit and you are responsible for all that may follow.



The Affluent Homeless: A Sleeping Pod, A Hired Desk And A Handful Of Clothes by Sam Sanders, *NPR*, April 23rd, 2019.

More young people are leaning into the rental or sharing economy — owning less of everything and renting and sharing a whole lot more. Housing, cars, music, workspaces. In some places, such as Los Angeles, this rental life has gone to an extreme.

5 Steven T. Johnson, 27, works in social media advertising and lives in Hollywood. He spends most of his days using things he does not own.

He takes a ride-share service to get to the gym; he does not own a car. At the gym, he rents a locker. He uses the gym's laundry service because he does not own a washing machine.

10 Johnson doesn't even have an apartment, actually. He rents a bed in a large room with other people who rent beds, for nights, weeks or months at a time, through a service called PodShare. All the residents share a kitchen and bathrooms. Johnson also rents a desk at WeWork, a coworking space.

And he says the only clothes he owns are two versions of the same outfit.

Johnson says he owns so little that he has even been able to get rid of his backpack. "I gave that up two months ago," he says.

15 He says that for him, this lifestyle isn't cumbersome or confusing. "That's what's great," he says. "When you don't own things, you don't have to keep track of them. You just show up."

He's part of a newish group of young people. He is educated and owns his own business. He could be considered well off, but he is also, in a way, homeless. By choice.

20 There are two big reasons for this shift: the price of housing and student loan debt. A little more than a third of millennials currently own homes, a rate lower than Generation X and baby boomers when they were the same age.

But is there something else going on as well? Does Johnson represent a fundamental shift in American capitalism as we know it?

25 Skyler Wang, a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Berkeley who studies the sharing economy, says even if young people own less and are less enamored with ownership than their parents may be, they still have a lot of stuff — it's just not tangible.

"I talked to a lot of minimalists," Wang says. "They're the type of people who love to couch-surf. They own like 30 things, but ... they hoard digitally. They have tons of photographs. They have thousands and thousands of Instagram posts."

They still live in an economy of stuff — it's just different stuff. It's experiences.

30 How do businesses deal with this? For starters, a lot more companies are getting into rentals. Even Ikea is starting to lease its furniture.

The outdoor chain REI announced recently it is vastly expanding its rental program for things like camping gear. Eric Artz, acting CEO of the company, says this requires a different kind of outreach.

35 "We're selling joy," he says. "We're selling inspiration when you get out on a trail or go for a bike ride. We're selling the adrenaline buzz at the end of a run, and we're just trying to enable that in any way we possibly can."

Juliet Schor, a sociologist at Boston College who studies the rental and sharing economies, says not everyone is in it for the same reasons. Some are doing it just for enjoyment. Some are doing it to move toward transactions that are less corporate and more personal. Others are willing to spend more for convenience.

But a lot rent and share because they're broke and they need to save money.

40 "I think it's a mistake to characterize them ... with one kind of economic orientation or orientation to money," Schor says.

That makes it really hard to predict whether renting and sharing is our long-term future, or just a fad — even for Johnson, who is totally plugged in to a rental life.

45 "It's not something that you can do forever, because you do need to have a place that you can genuinely point to and say, this is my home," he says.

Dear Extinction Rebellion: Your aims are worthy, but take your pink boat to China instead

Boris Johnson, *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 2019

Look, I share some of the irritation at these climate change protesters. I am not in favour of paralysing public transport in the greatest city on earth, and stopping people from getting to work. I don't want some double-barrelled activist telling me that air travel is only to be used in emergencies – when his own Instagram account contains pictures of his recent skiing holiday. I admire some of these celebrity thespians, but when I see them mounted on a pink boat in Oxford Circus, blocking the traffic and telling the world how many trees they have planted to offset the carbon footprint of their flights in from Los Angeles, I slightly grind my teeth.

And I am utterly fed up with being told by nice young people that their opinions are more important than my own – because they will be around a lot longer than me, and therefore that they have a greater stake in the future of the planet.

With all due humility to my juniors, I intend to be alive for a very long time. Indeed, one of my few remaining ambitions is to be on the beach at Hastings to write a colour story, for the Telegraph, on the thousandth anniversary of the Norman landings in 2066 (complete with reflections, at this rate, on wherever the UK will have got to in the Brexit negotiations). And I am not sure why it is so glibly assumed that young people care more than anyone else about these issues.

On the contrary, the older I get, the more worried I am about the future of the planet. I speak with the authority of someone who has seen decades of change – and the frightening impact of humanity on the natural world. I remember the beaches of the Mediterranean in the Seventies – as clean and beautiful as they were in the days of Odysseus. I have seen the arrival of the tide of plastic detritus.

In my lifetime the population of the world has more than doubled, and I have seen the effect: from the smog in huge new megalopolises in Asia to the forest-clearing fires over Africa. I can remember looking 40 years ago at the huge herds of wild beasts on the plains of the Serengeti, and I have the ocular proof that those herds are smaller today.

It is precisely because I have seen the evidence, over time, that I cannot find it in my heart – no matter how smug, irritating and disruptive they may be – to condemn these protesters today.

They are right to draw attention to the loss of habitat, and the extinction of species. They are also right to sound the alarm about all manner of man-made pollution, including CO₂. As it happens, they have helped to draw attention – by their protests – to some of the most extraordinary statistics in the current debate, some of which are actually extremely encouraging.

You may not know this, and I doubt that you will have heard it from the lips of the protesters, but here in the UK we are a world leader in reducing the greenhouse gases that are associated with climate change. We have championed the retrofitting of buildings, commercial and residential, as well as insisting on demanding standards for new build. We have boosted renewable energy supplies, so that there are some days when the UK receives more than half its power from the wind or the Sun. We have been utterly ruthless in getting rid of coal-fired power stations, which now account for less than five per cent of UK power generation, and not much more than one per cent of total CO₂ output. [...]

In the next few weeks it seems likely that the Climate Change Minister, Claire Perry, will announce a target of net zero emissions by 2050. That would be an amazing achievement; but the evidence of the last few years is that it can be done, not through hair-shirted Leftyism but solid Tory technological optimism. Who wanted to stick with coal? Who fought against the closure of the pits? Arthur Scargill, Jeremy Corbyn and the rest of the far Left. Who was the first British prime minister to put the environment at the centre of politics? Margaret Thatcher.

I am not saying for one second that the climate change activists are wrong in their concerns for the planet – and of course there is much more that can be done. But the UK is by no means the prime culprit, and may I respectfully suggest to the Extinction Rebellion crew that next Earth Day they look at China, where CO₂ output has not been falling, but rising vertiginously. The Chinese now produce more CO₂ than the EU and US combined – and more than 60 per cent of their power comes from coal.

Here, for heaven's sake, is the real opportunity for protest. It was only in 1990 that the UK was 70 per cent reliant on coal. Look at the speed with which we have turned things round. If Britain can so dramatically reduce its dependence on coal, and its CO₂ output, why can't the Chinese do the same?

My map tells me that London is nearer to Beijing than it is to Los Angeles. Surely this is the time for the protesters to take their pink boat to Tiananmen Square, and lecture them in the way they have been lecturing us. Whether the Chinese will allow them to block the traffic is another matter.

Georgetown students have voted in favor of reparations. Will America? By Christine Emba, *The Washington Post*, April 21st, 2019.

5 Georgetown University students have voted in favor of reparations. Two-thirds of undergraduates who took part in a campuswide referendum April 11 voted “yes” on a student fee, of exactly \$27.20 each semester, to create a reparations fund for the descendants of Georgetown’s slaves. The number is in remembrance of the 272 slaves sold in 1838 by Georgetown’s Jesuit leaders to resolve the school’s debt at a critical point in its history, essentially saving the school.

10 It’s a notable number and a remarkable event. While a number of institutions have begun to acknowledge their ties to slavery, Georgetown has offered a formal apology, renamed buildings and given descendants of the 272 preference in its admissions process. And although a discussion of reparations has begun among some candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination, Georgetown’s undergraduates now lead the national conversation. The plan is by no means off the ground — the resolution is nonbinding, and a challenge to the referendum is already being considered — but the vote reflects a burst of moral clarity around a fundamental national question. And the fault lines at Georgetown reflect those in the country today — and reveal the real reason reparations may be an American impossibility.

15 Before the referendum, more than one opinion piece ran in the student newspaper the Hoya urging students to vote no. One criticized the idea of a “mandatory fee which, by nature, represents a moral judgement on the responsibility of Georgetown students for the institution’s past . . . [contradicting the] very value of liberty.” Another argued that the student body “was not obliged” to pay for Georgetown’s “institutional failures.” It went on: “Most certainly, no member of the current student body ever participated in the slave trade nor willingly operates an institution that does.”

20 Americans love their liberty — its importance is a truth we hold to be self-evident. And threaded through our idea of freedom is a near-obsessive insistence on our individual merit.

25 Our country’s founding myth says: “I am my own person, creator of my own new world. I built all of this myself — or maybe my father or grandfather did — and I deserve the credit.” It’s a story served to new arrivals as soon as possible, a fantasy made more plausible by an unspoken agreement not to discuss the darker elements of our country’s past.

By extension, it allows all who swear by the self-made myth to escape obligation to others: “If you tried hard enough, you could be where I am, too. Therefore I am responsible for no one else, and your moral claims have no hold on me.”

30 It’s a tenacious illusion, and a hollow one. And any discussion of reparations for slavery threatens to strip it painfully away.

35 Because slavery interrupts the narrative entirely. Any truthful discussion of the United States’ history leads to the inconvenient reminder that even the poorest American ancestor had to have gotten their building material somewhere, or, more likely, if they were white, from someone. Even if a white person didn’t own slaves outright, a system of white supremacy lent a leg up. “I worked hard for what I got, and I’m still behind” becomes an obvious dodge — an unwillingness to recognize that others worked harder still but with no chance of benefit at all.

But admitting as much would suggest indebtedness and, as a result, obligation. And that, our founding myth cannot allow. Because then, do our successes no longer belong to us alone?

40 Even the Georgetown students who wrote op-eds opposing the proposed reparations fee were willing to admit to this conflict. “We agree that the Georgetown of today would not exist if not for the sale of 272 slaves in 1838,” said one article published in February. That’s more than most of the country seems able to concede.

A personal story is hard to revise; a national one, harder still. A school like Georgetown is usually ground zero for fostering the myth of individual merit — while the “GU272” students were organizing their reparations vote, it was discovered that the university was part of a college admissions scandal in which wealthy parents had allegedly bribed their children’s way through a supposedly merit-based process.

45 But with their “yes” vote on a reparations fee, a majority of Georgetown’s students have shown that they possess the moral imagination to suggest a modification to the American story, one that acknowledges a more complicated communal history. The question is whether the rest of the nation will ever catch up.



James Comey: Take down the Confederate statues now, by James Comey, *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2019.

James Comey is a former director of the FBI and a former deputy attorney general.

5 White people designed blackface to keep black people down, to intimidate, mock and stereotype. It began during the 19th century and wasn't about white people honoring the talent of black people by dressing up to look like them. It was about mocking them and depicting them as lazy, stupid and less than fully human. It was a tool of oppression. As a college kid in Virginia during the 1980s, I knew that and so did my classmates. But a whole lot of white people seem to not know that history or understand why blackface is so offensive, whether it's practiced by a college student or a new doctor. The turmoil in Virginia — where I have lived most of my adult life, including nine years in Richmond — may do some good if it reminds white people that a river of oppression runs through U.S. history, deep and wide, down to today.

10 But the reporters hurrying to the state capital to cover this important story about a poorly understood tool of white oppression are literally rushing past much larger and more powerful symbols of that oppression — symbols born of a similar desire to keep black people down. There is no doubt that Virginia's leaders need to be held accountable for their personal history, but every Virginia leader is responsible for the racist symbols that still loom over our lives.

15 The Confederate statues of Richmond's Monument Avenue weren't erected to honor the service of brave warriors. Those soldiers had been dead for decades before the statues went up. No, the statues were put up by white people, beginning in the 1890s, to remind black people that, despite all that nonsense of Presidents Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, as well as the so-called Reconstruction, we are back, and you are back down. The towering likenesses of Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson weren't put up to celebrate history or heritage; they were put up as a message: The 13th, 20 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution aren't going to help you black folks because the South has risen from that humiliation. Jim Crow — a name rooted in blackface mockery — is king.

If you doubt that well-documented history — if you are tempted to buy the “heritage, not hate” rhetoric — ask yourself this question: “Where are the statues of James Longstreet?” Remember: Longstreet was Lee's most trusted general, his second-in-command, his “Old War Horse.” Longstreet was a brave and 25 talented warrior for the Confederacy from beginning to end. But there aren't any Longstreet statues in Richmond — and there weren't any at all until 1998, at Gettysburg. That's because his service to the United States continued after the Civil War, and he did something inconsistent with the purpose of the statues, and of blackface: He treated African Americans as citizens of the United States. Longstreet 30 agreed to serve his reunified country, joined Lincoln's Republican Party and helped Grant protect the rights of newly freed black Americans.

Longstreet committed two unforgivable sins in the eyes of white supremacists: He criticized Lee's war leadership, and he led an African American militia to put down an 1874 white rebellion in Louisiana. That's why this central figure in Civil War history is not depicted among the other Confederate statues 35 in Richmond. The statues were about only a certain kind of heritage, just as blackface was about a certain kind of storytelling. It was about hate, not history or art.

Blackface, and our elected leaders' involvement with it, is an important subject, and our country must confront that part of our racist past. Those who did it, or lied about it, shouldn't hold office. Past actions matter. But our present is filled with gigantic bronze embodiments of that same racism. They loom over 40 Virginians every day. If Virginia's leaders want to atone for a troubling legacy, changing state law so Richmond's statues no longer taunt the progress of our country would be a good place to start. Expressing bipartisan horror at blackface photos is essential, but removing the statues would show all of America that Virginia really has changed.

It's time to talk about being white in America, by Jonathan Metzl, *The Washington Post*, April 29, 2019.

Jonathan M. Metzl directs the Center for Medicine, Health, and Society at Vanderbilt University and is the author of "Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland."

It's time to talk about what it means to be white in the United States.

That's what I was trying to do Saturday afternoon at the Politics and Prose bookstore in Northwest Washington when I was interrupted by a group of white nationalists. Ironically, the protesters' chant — "This land is our land" — served only to reinforce my point.

5 For too long, many white Americans have avoided this conversation, and we've done so for a reason: We don't have to see the color white. Race scholars often argue that white privilege broadly means not needing to reflect on whiteness. White is the default setting, the assumed norm. A white American does not have to think about being white when walking down the street — while people marked as not-white are often noticed and surveilled. White people have the superpower of invisibility.

10 Yet with the rise of President Trump's brand of resentment politics, American whiteness is increasingly hard to overlook. Trumpian rhetoric defines white identity not by shared values but by shared resentments. Whiteness, in this telling, is under siege. Walled behind Trump's claim that the country is "full," and his equivocations on white extremism, lies the notion that immigrants and citizens of color are usurping the privileges of whiteness. This narrative is then amplified by increasingly emboldened white nationalists like the ones who sought to shout me down Saturday.

Trump did not invent insecure whiteness. He is only a skilled manipulator of the fears at its heart.

15 For the past eight years, I've studied how these politics of racial resentment have profound negative consequences for working-class white communities. I traveled across southern and midwestern states to track the everyday effects of anti-government, anti-immigrant politics and policies. Time and again, I found that the material realities of working-class white lives are made worse not by immigrants and citizens of color — but by GOP policies that promise greatness but deliver despair.

20 For instance: Blocking the Affordable Care Act or defunding government programs makes for great campaign slogans for those who imagine that such programs primarily benefit immigrants and citizens of color. But the cuts to education, transit and health-care delivery systems that follow cost many white, red-state Americans months and years of life expectancy. Funds that might support white working-class communities are diverted into tax cuts for the wealthy. If working-class conservative voters ever demanded better roads, schools or hospitals as the price for their support, the GOP would be unable to fund these tax cuts.

25 My research suggests that constantly blaming "others" masks ways that the GOP platform depends on rendering even its working-class white supporters expendable. White Americans are literally dying from Trump's brand of identity politics. But if whiteness is sick, what's the cure?

That's the dilemma facing white Americans who recoil from Trump's cruel politics — and Democratic politicians who wish to speak to conservative white voters. They, too, are often hampered by not seeing whiteness. What's needed is a language to promote different ways of being white.

30 One place to start is by avoiding what psychologists call "zero sum" formulations of race relations — in which there are "winners" and "losers" in fights for power or resources. Equitable societies are healthier for everyone, and alliances among groups with common socioeconomic interests (rather than identities) are more successful in achieving shared objectives. A white Kansan has more in common with his Hispanic neighbor than with a white Tennessean.

35 Unpacking whiteness also requires white people speaking openly — not by proxy conversations about immigration or guns — about the strengths and limitations of American whiteness. This means reflecting on white traditions of generosity and resilience, and not just the anxieties, biases and fears of white communities. It means talking about ways that white Americans can enhance or thwart American prosperity. And about how, to make America truly great, we need a more communal version of racial justice to emerge.

40 Such an approach should acknowledge that whiteness is not monolithic. Trump — and my protesters — seem to have commandeered the narrative, but there are different ways of being white in America. It's too easy for liberals to overlook how many white conservatives want better communities as well.

During my research, I saw countless examples of white Americans in the reddest of red counties who were proud of their conservative values but also understood their moral obligation to immigrants and citizens of color. In other words, they were willing to see their privilege and to begin the work of dismantling it.

45 Is there a way for Democrats to reach these voters? What might a political appeal to their concerns even look like? How Democrats answer these questions may well determine the results of the 2020 election.

To refute Trump-style politics, white Americans of conscience have to "see" what their whiteness means. It's not enough for well-meaning whites to #resist specific policies. They need to contest his very definition of whiteness.

50 Such a reckoning may not be comfortable. But it is necessary, not just for a more equitable country but also for defeating the politics of racial resentment at the polls.

Brexit makes the case for an independent Scotland

Philip Stephens, *The Financial Times*, May 2 2019

When Scotland voted to maintain the union with England, the argument that separation would diminish both nations seemed compelling. Five years on, Nicola Sturgeon says Brexit has broken the bargain. Scotland's first minister and leader of the Scottish National party is preparing for a possible second referendum by mid-2021.

Ms Sturgeon may be a touch impatient. She is also essentially right. Leaving the EU unpicks the logic of Scotland's place in the UK. The independence vote in September 2014 saw 55 per cent support the union and 45 per cent opt for independence. The decision was clear, and yet still close enough to represent a reprieve rather than an unequivocal commitment to the status quo.

The unspoken message was that the cloak of Britishness thrown over England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could not be taken for granted. For a millisecond, the then prime minister David Cameron seemed to grasp the implications. Harking back to shared bonds of history and culture was not enough to counter the emotional pull of independence. Scotland was promised parity of esteem — a fresh political settlement to shift more decision-making from Westminster to the Edinburgh parliament. The pledge was forgotten as soon as the votes were counted. Without so much as token consultation with the Scottish government, Mr Cameron marched ahead with his ruinous plan for a referendum on EU membership.

Brexit has stalled momentarily because of the paralysis in Whitehall and Westminster. Yet Britain has already been diminished by the decision to leave. The economy is weakened and British negotiators are habitually sidelined at international meetings. Scots are paying the price of a reckless gamble to make it easier for Mr Cameron to handle the rising English nationalism in the Conservative party. Brexit was an English project. The prime minister scarcely cared that Scotland was more than content that a portion of the sovereignty it entrusted to Westminster was then pooled with Brussels. Some 62 per cent of Scots backed Remain in June 2016 versus 38 per cent for Leave.

Theresa May has been as blithely indifferent as her predecessor to Scotland's legitimate interest in the shape of any Brexit settlement. The Edinburgh parliament, along with the Wales and Northern Ireland assemblies, was denied a voice in setting the negotiating framework with the EU27. The Scottish economy needs migrant workers. Mrs May decreed that an end to the free movement of workers was a red line. The views of Scottish MPs at Westminster were brushed aside, while, until the bust-up over arrangements for the province's border with the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland's smaller Democratic Unionist party was courted assiduously. Mrs May had hoped the votes of the DUP would provide a majority for her Brexit deal in the House of Commons. The Scots could go hang.

Mr Cameron's reckless insouciance and Mrs May's cold indifference provide reason enough for Scotland to think again. The game-changer, however, is that Brexit has forced on the Scots a choice they neither asked for nor wanted. In 2014, voters backed an arrangement that at once preserved the advantages of being part of the UK and underwrote membership of the EU. To borrow a phrase, by holding on to its ties with the rest of the UK, Scotland could have its cake and eat it. Post-Brexit, Scotland has no option but to choose. Sticking with England means tearing itself out of Europe. Preserving a strong relationship with the rest of Europe demands that it leaves the UK. At the whim of the English Tory party, Scots have been told to surrender an identity. They can no longer be at once Scottish, British and European.

Psychologically as well as practically, it is easy to see why many of those who voted against independence in 2014 might now change their minds. Leaving the EU will accentuate the asymmetry of the relationship with England. The Scots face the prospect of being shackled to a partner that has turned at once rightward and inwards. The gulf between the deeply ingrained centrism of Scotland's political culture and that of an England lurching to the right has widened into a chasm Scotland wants open borders at a time when English nationalists are slamming them shut.

None of this is to say that Scotland is ready for an immediate leap to independence. There are hard economic questions still to be answered, not least about whether an independent Scotland would have its own currency. A fair swath of the SNP's traditional supporters share the narrow nationalist perspective that has now taken over the Tory party. They voted for Brexit.

Faced with the upheaval of leaving the EU, another group may hesitate to embrace the inevitable uncertainties that would flow from a constitutional rupture with England. Ms Sturgeon's timetable may therefore be too ambitious — 2021 looks too soon. That said, it is hard to imagine that five or so years from now a majority of Scots will see any purpose in the relationship. Small states flourish in the EU — witness the Republic of Ireland, which has junked the anti-British grievances and resentments that once defined its worldview. The break-up of the UK union would be England's great loss. But how to persuade Scotland that it still has something to gain from staying?

Anti-Abortion-Rights Groups Push GOP To Rethink Rape And Incest Exceptions by Sarah McCammon, NPR, May 22nd, 2019.

Opponents of abortion rights have a long history of supporting abortion bans with three major exceptions: when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or when a woman's life is at risk.

5 But fueled by momentum from the passage of a restrictive abortion law in Alabama, a coalition of anti-abortion-rights groups released a letter Wednesday asking Republican officials to "reconsider decades-old talking points" on exceptions to such laws.

"We understand that issues like rape and incest are difficult topics to tackle; nevertheless, it is our view that the value of human life is not determined by the circumstances of one's conception or birth," said a draft of the letter provided to NPR by Students for Life of America, which led the effort.

10 The letter, which is addressed to Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna Romney McDaniel, goes on: "A child conceived in rape is still a child. We don't blame children for other matters outside their control. Why should we do so here?" The document praises Alabama's law, which prohibits abortion at all stages of pregnancy unless a woman's life is threatened. It would send doctors convicted of violating the law to prison for up to 99 years. That law, like several other early bans passed this year, has not yet taken effect.

15 In an interview, Students for Life President Kristan Hawkins said she hopes to see more Republican lawmakers support abortion bans that do not include exceptions for rape and incest.

"I think it's time to start having the conversation," Hawkins said. "There is a fear in the Republican Party about talking about rape at all. ... But I don't think it's something we should be afraid of."

That position is at odds with statements in recent days by several leading Republicans who have expressed opposition to Alabama's law because of its lack of exceptions.

20 "Personally, I would have the exceptions," McDaniel told CNN. "That's my personal belief. But we are a party that is a broad tent."

President Trump also appeared to distance himself from laws like Alabama's, tweeting, "As most people know, and for those who would like to know, I am strongly Pro-Life, with the three exceptions - Rape, Incest and protecting the Life of the mother – the same position taken by Ronald Reagan."

25 As *The Washington Post* has noted, former President Ronald Reagan's positions on abortion shifted throughout his political career, and as California's governor in the 1960s, he signed what was then seen as a liberal abortion law.

The official GOP platform generally takes an anti-abortion-rights position and does not spell out exceptions for rape or incest. But many leading Republicans who oppose abortion rights have historically allowed for those exceptions, said Mary Ziegler, a law professor at Florida State University who studies the history of reproductive rights.

30 Abandoning that position "would mark a major shift in the public terms of debate," Ziegler said in an email. "We are seeing a major bid for strategic power being made by absolutists."

Travis Weber, vice president for policy at the Family Research Council, who signed the letter, said he sees momentum for more restrictive abortion laws.

35 "There is no time like now to continue [the] conversation about protecting all human life, no matter how defenseless and helpless," Weber wrote in a message.

Other signers of the letter urging Republicans to rethink their messaging on rape and incest exceptions include leaders of March for Life, Operation Rescue and Priests for Life.

40 But other leading anti-abortion-rights groups did not sign the letter, among them the Susan B. Anthony List, which has played an influential role in lobbying Trump to appoint conservative judges. In an emailed statement, spokeswoman Mallory Quigley said the organization strongly supports Alabama's law and called it and other recently passed abortion restrictions an "inspiration." She declined to comment specifically on why the group chose not to sign.

Steve Aden of Americans United for Life said he had not seen the document but expressed skepticism about removing rape and incest exceptions.

45 "The pro-life movement, state by state, has made real progress in getting the Supreme Court and the state legislatures to see that *Roe* should be reconsidered, but I don't see the need or the wisdom of these absolutist positions," Aden said, referring to the 1973 decision that legalized abortion nationwide.

The letter to McDaniel comes as Charlotte Pence, the daughter of Vice President Pence, penned an op-ed in *The Washington Times* expressing support for Alabama's law. "Personally, I would not encourage a friend to get an abortion if she suffered the horrendous evil of rape or incest because I care about her child — and her. I do not believe abortion provides healing," she writes.

50 Republican pollster and strategist Glen Bolger said the current debates over abortion — including efforts in states like New York to expand abortion rights — mark the end of what he describes as "a longtime undeclared truce" on abortion. In an email, Bolger said advocates on both sides of the abortion debate are pushing harder, with many reproductive rights groups working to remove abortion restrictions and many abortion-rights opponents promoting bans with virtually no exceptions.

The tragic death of Lyra McKee shows our carelessness towards the fragility of the Good Friday Agreement

Sean O'Grady, *The Independent*, April 19 2019

The death of a journalist on the streets of Derry at the hands, it seems, of the New IRA adds a particularly sad and poignant dimension to the latest outbreak of low-level terror on Northern Ireland (by the standards of the worst years of the Troubles).

Lyra McKee was doing her job, and it cost her life. It highlights the risks that brave reporters take in every war or conflict, including riots and demonstrations, and we know only too well that journalists are now actively targeted by some groups, and most barbarically by so-called Islamic State and by Syrian government forces.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland, who were the main targets of a gunman firing indiscriminately, say that McKee was not being targeted. In truth, however, the violence would be no less reprehensible and sinister were it a PSNI officer who was left dying in Creggan. A life is a life, whether in uniform or not.

It is dismal to see, like a replay of the bad old days, petrol bombs being lobbed at armoured police Land Rovers, the anger and hatred revived by yet another of the very many Irish loaded anniversaries – in this case the Easter Rising of 1916. Local elections seem to have stirred up resentments as well. With the Stormont power sharing executive in abeyance for more than two years now and no sign of reconciliation, the atmosphere was becoming combustible.

Like the recent amateurish Republican letter bombing campaign, these events serve as a reminder that dissident republican groups are growing more militant. It is not a cheap point to link the upsurge in violence – partly – on Brexit. The possibility of a hard border on the island of Ireland is something that inflames passions that not enough people on the eastern side of the Irish Sea, especially a new generation of British Tory politicians, sufficiently understand. When Boris Johnson talked about the Irish border issue as “the tail wagging the dog” in reference to Brexit he betrayed a terrible indifference to the lives of people in the province. When he fetched up at the Democratic Unionist conference to gather some support for himself and his ambition to be PM he showed he simply didn't care about being seen to “take sides” in the historic divisions. Theresa May also displayed a shocking carelessness when she formed her loose partnership under the supply and confidence agreement with those she described as “friends and allies” of the Tories, and bunged them £1bn to keep her in power. Much good it has done her. Taking sides with Arlene Foster was a very stupid thing to do.

There is a reason why British politicians have kept their snouts out of Ireland for a long time. John Major's government has it right when it declared it had “no selfish strategic and economic interest” in keeping Northern Ireland in the UK. He and Tony Blair, like Ted Heath, Harold Wilson and even Margaret Thatcher, were circumspect about taking sides, despite sometimes tough action against the terrorists. By the way, these are also examples Jeremy Corbyn should take heed of too many unionists in Northern Ireland distrust him as an honest broker for an honest and fair peace.

It is now 21 years since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, and too many have come to take peace for granted. The threat of a full-on civil war in Ulster is perfectly real. The war that has been going on, with pauses, for about 400 years was not ended in the 1990s indefinitely. The process was and is just that – a process, not an event. The collapse of political democratic arrangements and Brexit have proved too much for the peace process. Trust has gone, and created a familiar vacuum.

Brexit doesn't justify violence and shooting journalists dead – nothing does. Even if a hard border with customs controls were established, and even if that required police and army backup to deal with terrorism, none of that should prevent a democratic decision about Brexit. The New IRA does not hold a veto over parliament.

But it is a hard political fact that some violence would undoubtedly be unleashed with a hard border, and we cannot know where it will end. The hard Brexiteers have to be honest about that and face up to years more of British military commitment to an unwinnable war if that wish to stop the tail wagging the dog is to be made effective. These Tories, and some Labour figures such as Kate Hoey, should also reflect that in such a volatile situation a new border poll could lead to Irish unification, just in time for the independence centenary celebrations in 2022. Do not forget Northern Ireland voted Remain (56 per cent) in 2016, and that Sinn Fein and nationalism have probably never been running so strongly since partition.

A simple fact can now be briefly restated: Brexit is incompatible with peace in Ireland, and demonstrably so. It is something all should be aware of, and as we were not in the 2016 referendum. [...]

For decades we have ignored the stories of the Polish Windrush Generation – now it's time to listen

In these times, as borders open or become more porous, the definition of who belongs inside any given nation becomes even more rigid

Nicholas Boston, *The Independent*, 29 May 2019

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Since the Windrush scandal caused mass outrage last year, much has been said about the appalling ways in which the government treated a whole class of citizens, but little effort is made to really consider the nuances of what the “generation” means. Consider, for example, the Polish presence – a whole contingent of Windrush arrivals who are rarely represented when discussing these issues.

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There were 66 Polish refugees on board the Empire Windrush on its now historic passage from the Caribbean to England. After the ship departed Kingston, Jamaica, it detoured to Tampico, a port on the coast of Mexico, to collect the Polish passengers. They had been displaced in Mexico since 1944. All except one were wives and children of Polish military men who had fought alongside the Allies against Nazi Germany. In recognition, Britain had granted the soldiers leave to remain¹, as well as family reunification rights, under a policy called the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947. The Empire Windrush was one of over 50 ships that transported Polish displaced persons from all over the world to the UK. I have been researching and writing about this Polish presence aboard the Windrush for a decade. When I began researching this group, I referred to them as “the Windrush Poles”, but I now believe this title holds the potential to do as much harm as good.

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How long do you have to live in a society and contribute to it before you are regarded as truly belonging? This is the aching question at the heart of the Windrush scandal, and I hear an echo of it, now at a low decibel but always threatening to pump up its volume, in “Windrush Poles”.

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In these times, as borders open or become more porous, the definition of who belongs inside any given nation becomes even more rigid. For example, it is still common practice now in 2019 to speak of Polish nationals who arrived in Britain after 2004 as “migrants”, even though many are now British citizens.

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Last Tuesday, family and friends of Karol Andrzej Pisula, formerly of Harlow, Essex, gathered at the Parndon Wood Cemetery and Crematorium to bid him a final farewell. Mr Pisula, who was 86, suffered a fatal aneurysm. On 21 June exactly one month from the day of his funeral, is the anniversary of the arrival at Tilbury in 1948 of the Empire Windrush. Mr Pisula, who was 15 at the time, was one of the 1027 passengers. (...)

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His Windrush generation experience was both the same and different to his African-Caribbean counterparts. He told me that he had not faced discrimination in seeking housing and employment in Britain as a Polish man, unlike most of his British West Indian counterparts. However, he did not evade the same othering comments and attitudes they suffered “Why don’t you go back to Poland?”, “You’re only a bloody foreigner,” and so on. Mainly for the echo of these words in our present Brexit moment, hurled at Polish and other EU residents, as well as Black and Asian Britons, I now find it more comfortable to refer in my writing to the Polish refugees who arrived in Britain aboard the Empire Windrush as the Windrush 66. With Mr Pisula’s passing, only a couple of the Windrush 66 remain alive.

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There is a tendency on occasions such as this to mourn the “passing of a generation”. We have been bandying about the word “generation” quite a bit over the past year since the Windrush scandal began making headlines. But the interpretation of the word itself is vexing. What determines when a generation begins and ends, and who defines the terms of its membership? Nowadays, individuals know they are part of a specific generation from the outset of their lives because they are told so, mostly by marketers. Along with this identification comes a prescribed set of likes and dislikes. Millennials like this; Gen Zers dislike that. This is a recent development. Historically, the very idea that a generation had been formed of a common condition or experience was a determination made in retrospect.

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In Poland, the Generation of Columbuses is a term given to the group of people born just before Mr Pisula who were adolescents during the Second World War. They are so named because it is thought that Poland was a place they had to discover after the ravages of war and the imposition of communism. What, then, will history make of the Windrush 66? As a generation, they focus our attention on today’s refugees, particularly women and children. By following the Windrush 66 from the first footsteps they took at Tilbury to, for most, the ground in which they are interred, we get a picture of the present in motion. Said Peter Pisula, a son of the departed, “We decorated Karol’s coffin with a British and a Polish flag to demonstrate that he was a true British Pole.”

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Nicholas Boston is a correspondent for *The Independent*

Série: Langues vivantes

Langue: Anglais

Analyse LV2 d’un texte hors programme

¹ Leave to remain : *permis de séjour au Royaume-Uni*

Rather than making concessions to bigots, politicians must confront them. It's the only way to end the violence.

5 On 19 April 1995, Timothy McVeigh blew up the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people and injuring 684, in the deadliest act of domestic US terrorism to date. A white supremacist, he was radicalised by what he regarded as excessive federal government power, US foreign policy and a constellation of bigotries too numerous to mention. He was sentenced to death and placed in a maximum-security prison in Colorado.

10 In prison, McVeigh befriended Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, who was in the next-door cell. Yousef, who trained in al-Qaida camps in Afghanistan, had tried to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993. Born within four days of each other here were two young men both unrepentant about their crimes and ideologies. McVeigh was executed in June 2001, and Yousef would later state: "I have never [known] anyone who has so similar a personality to mine."

15 It is presumably in recognition of the unity of purpose between terrorists who attach themselves to Islam and those who embrace white supremacy that the neo-Nazi terror group National Action has called for a "white jihad". Inadequate young men brimming with rage and brooding resentment, in pursuit of moral certainty, doctrinal purity and a desire to make their mark on a world in which they feel increasingly superfluous and disoriented. They are as made for each other as Yousef and McVeigh.

20 The central difference is in how these two strands of political violence are understood and challenged. In British news alone this week we have seen a National Action activist in court planning to kill an MP and a policewoman with a machete; British soldiers in Afghanistan using the Labour leader's picture for target practice; and a senior Tory and Brexit proponent, Jacob Rees-Mogg, retweeting a key figure from a far-right party in Europe.

White supremacy poses a serious and urgent threat to our political stability, social cohesion and general security. White people are being radicalised at an alarming rate and in disconcerting numbers. The number of far-right terrorists in British prisons tripled between 2017 and 2018.

25 While the violence may come from the fringes, the encouragement comes from the centre. Only last week Britain's counter-terrorism chief, Neil Basu, claimed far-right terrorists were being radicalised by mainstream newspaper coverage; this week a cartoonist who portrayed refugees as vermin received a fellowship for his 50 years' service to the industry. A senior politician has described women in niqabs as looking like letterboxes; and Ukip, polling at 7%, appointed a notorious far-right activist, Tommy Robinson, as an adviser.

30 There is of course a relationship between the brutal manifestations of bigotry and intolerance and the antiseptic talk of amendments and parliamentary procedure linked to the Brexit negotiations. But it is contextual rather than causal. Brexit didn't create racism. It has exploited and nurtured it. It has given many licence to say and do things that would previously be regarded as unacceptable, and mainstreamed what was marginal.

There were lots of reasons why people voted to leave the European Union. But racism – particularly expressed in the form of nostalgia and xenophobia – helped to make Brexit possible, rather than the other way around.

35 This intensification of right-wing nationalism is global. It's just a few weeks since the deadly shootings in the mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, and a few months since the massacre at the synagogue in Pittsburgh. We live in a period when the presence of fascists in government in Europe is no longer noteworthy and neo-Nazi demonstrators have an advocate in the White House.

40 The number of right-wing extremists arrested in Europe nearly doubled between 2016 and 2017; there was a 74% increase in anti-semitic offences in France last year; and the number of hate groups in the US is the highest ever. According to a 2017 Washington Post poll, one in 10 Americans believes that holding Nazi views is acceptable – assuming very few of those were black or Latino, that's a lot of white people in a very dark place.

45 The reality is that the state can only contain a terror threat – it can't eliminate it. As Northern Ireland showed us political violence demands political solutions. At some stage that will require our political class to stop pandering to bigotry and start challenging it. Our politicians know that racism is the problem. They have yet to understand that anti-racism is the solution.

Why Julian Assange should be extradited

The WikiLeaks co-founder is accused of hacking, not leaking, and that is a serious crime

The Economist Apr 20th 2019

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When Julian Assange was dragged out of Ecuador's embassy and into a London courtroom on April 11th, you could be forgiven for thinking that it was his life's work, moral character and personal hygiene in the dock. Mr Assange was "no hero", said Jeremy Hunt, Britain's foreign secretary. Nonsense, retorted Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, he "told us the truth about what was actually happening in Afghanistan and in Iraq". Ecuador's president complained that Mr Assange had repaid his country's hospitality by smearing faeces on the embassy wall. These soundbites miss the point. America accuses Mr Assange of hacking Pentagon computers. Does that charge justify his extradition?

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To be sure, Mr Assange's legacy deserves scrutiny. WikiLeaks did some good in its early years, exposing political corruption, financial malfeasance and military wrongdoing. But the decision to publish over 250,000 diplomatic cables in 2010 was malicious. The vast majority of messages revealed no illegality or misdeeds. Mr Assange's reckless publication of the unredacted versions of those cables the following year harmed America's interests by putting its diplomatic sources at risk of reprisals, persecution or worse.

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In 2016 Mr Assange's organisation showed even poorer judgment in engaging with Guccifer 2.0, an online persona widely assumed—and later proven—to be a front for Russia's gru spy agency. As America's presidential election approached, WikiLeaks disseminated lurid conspiracy theories around the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton, and asked the Russians for stolen emails relating to Mrs Clinton.

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When Mr Assange said in 2010 that "I enjoy helping people who are vulnerable," his fans cannot have thought he meant President Vladimir Putin. The contrast between WikiLeaks's attacks on American spy agencies and its collaboration with their autocratic rivals speaks volumes about Mr Assange's real motives.

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Yet neither Mr Assange's journalistic malpractice, nor his hostility to the West and narcissism, however contemptible, are the subject of criminal prosecution. Instead, an American courtroom will focus on his hacking. Mr Assange is accused of helping Chelsea Manning, who stole the war logs and diplomatic cables in 2010, try to crack the password to a classified military network. Though Mr Assange was probably unsuccessful, the alleged act made him a "co-conspirator" in the effort by Ms Manning.

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America's indictment has some troubling elements. It sets out how Mr Assange helped Ms Manning conceal her communications and exhorted her to provide more information. Both are acts within the legitimate bounds of a relationship between publisher and source, rather than signs of nefarious intent.

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Yet the central charge—computer hacking—is an indefensible violation of the law. Neither journalists nor activists, like Mr Assange, have carte blanche to break the law in exercising their First Amendment rights. They are entitled to publish freely; not to break and enter, physically or digitally, to do so.

40

Some critics gripe that going after Mr Assange for hacking is like going after Al Capone for tax evasion—that it was the only charge prosecutors think they can make stick, and that the real reason they want to lock him up is because he threatens national security. But there is nothing wrong with prosecutors acting pragmatically, and they were right not to file bigger charges, such as espionage, that might threaten press freedom if they were successfully used to convict the WikiLeaks founder. Mr Corbyn is therefore misguided when he suggests that Mr Assange is being targeted for extradition "for exposing evidence of atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan". If that were really how the system worked, hundreds of American journalists would be in jail.

45

In fact, he is being pursued for the alleged law-breaking that sets him apart from real journalists. So if British courts judge that America's request is lawful, Sajid Javid, Britain's home secretary, should let it proceed. New charges may yet be issued—particularly if the publication of the Mueller report on April 18th reveals new details of WikiLeaks's dealings with Russia. But America cannot add these once Britain has agreed to dispatch Mr Assange, without a further request.

50

If Sweden reopens its rape case against Mr Assange, which was closed in 2017 because he could not be arrested, Mr Javid might have to judge the precedence of the two claims. That would be hard: is trying to hack military secrets with intent to publish them, risking lives and national security, more or less serious than rape? Both charges carry similar sentences. And although America's request has come first, Sweden issued its original warrant in 2010. The best option would be for Britain to extradite him to Sweden, if Sweden requests it, and when justice has been done there, for Sweden to extradite him to America.

55

5 Police in Northern Ireland are still investigating the death of 29-year-old journalist Lyra McKee, who was shot Thursday during a police riot in Derry, also known as Londonderry. The Police Service of Northern Ireland arrested a 57-year-old woman on Tuesday in connection to the McKee's killing, but police later said she was released "unconditionally."

10 This came the same day a dissident group known as the New Irish Republican Army (IRA) took responsibility for the shooting, though it apologized for her death in a statement, indicating that McKee was not the intended target. (...) McKee, a journalist who has documented Northern Ireland's ongoing peace process, was killed in the riots that erupted after police raided Creggan housing estate in search of explosives and weapons they believed were about to be used by New IRA dissidents in attacks. Rioters threw Molotov cocktails at police, and two cars were hijacked and set on fire. McKee had been reporting on the confrontation when she was struck in the head by a bullet when someone fired at police officers. She died of her injuries at the hospital. Two teenagers were taken into custody shortly after McKee's death, but both were later released. Now, the 57-year-old woman has also been released.

20 The new IRA's violence revives concerns about tensions in Northern Ireland. The New IRA is a nationalist paramilitary group that formed around 2012. Though it often refers to itself as "the IRA," the majority of Provisional IRA members disarmed as part of the Good Friday Agreement — the landmark peace deal, signed in 1998, that ended decades of conflict in Northern Ireland known as the Troubles. It is made up of fragments of the Provisional IRA who didn't buy into the peace process and still want to kick out the British and unite Ireland by force. This New IRA doesn't have broad support among the population it claims to represent, and there's been 25 widespread pushback against the violence in Derry last Thursday.

30 Six major political parties in Northern Ireland — including Sinn Féin, which has historic ties to the IRA — put out a joint statement condemning McKee's murder, calling it "an attack on the peace and democratic processes." "It was a pointless and futile act to destroy the progress made over the last 20 years, which has the overwhelming support of people everywhere," the statement read.

35 But despite the near-universal condemnation of McKee's killing, her death has heightened anxieties about a return to the Troubles, when the public became entrapped in a cycle of political violence and terror attacks. Those concerns have been growing in recent months as the New IRA has carried out a series of violent incidents, including a car bombing in Derry in January and a slew of package bombs sent to locations in the United Kingdom, including London and Glasgow, Scotland. The fact that McKee's death occurred on the eve of Good Friday in 2019, 21 years after the peace deal was signed, added to those anxieties.

40 Of course, all of this is taking place against the backdrop of Brexit, with the question of the future of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland threatening to reignite tensions in the region. What does Brexit have to do with this? The 30-year conflict known as the Troubles officially ended in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, and now Brexit is threatening to unravel the fragile peace that agreement helped create. At issue is the 310-mile Irish border, the land boundary that separates Northern Ireland — which is part of the United Kingdom — from the Republic of Ireland, an independent country that is also a member of the 45 European Union.

50 That border was heavily militarized during the Troubles, serving as both a symbol of the strife and a very real target for attacks by nationalist paramilitary groups. A fundamental pillar of the Good Friday Agreement that ended the conflict involved greater cooperation between Northern Ireland and Ireland. That meant softening the border between the two. The European Union strengthened this truce, as its rules on trade and movement created the conditions for closer ties between the UK and Ireland. The watchtowers came down, the checkpoints disappeared. Now, the boundary is all but invisible.

55 Whether it will stay that way is one of the most critical questions of the Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU. Once the two split up, the Irish border will become the land border between the UK and Europe. If a hard border is established, many fear it could inflame still-simmering divisions by becoming a target for dissident groups — like the New IRA — once again.

5 It's never good – and always serious – when religion and politics make it into the same conversation. In Scotland, this happened earlier this month. The Church of Scotland, contributing as best they could, advised ministers to “open their doors” for an hour each day so that Scots could ruminate, and pray, about Brexit.

10 As the deadline looms, ruminating on Judgment Day has become popular among parishioners, politicians and pubgoers alike. In Edinburgh, my neck of the woods, people are divided. Stirling native Cameron Lonsdale says that even though he “doesn't like the English,” he would rather be with them, and stand behind Prime Minister Theresa May, than not. Assad Khan, an Edinburgh native, disagrees. “All May's done is make a stronger case for why we should have independence in Scotland,” he told me. It is difficult to argue with him.

15 Scots voted overwhelmingly to remain in the European Union. Sixty-two per cent of Scotland – a higher proportion than Wales, England or Northern Ireland – was rolled over when Brexit went forward. As Coree Brown Swan, a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Edinburgh, told me by e-mail, the fallout around Brexit has made the case for Scottish independence more complex, but also “more compelling.”

20 The numbers are ominous. A poll from August 2018 found that if Brexit does materialize, 47% of Scots would be for Scottish independence, with 10% saying they were unsure. This level of support is substantial – and should terrify the UK.

25 Days after the initial EU vote, Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon asserted that the situation justified another referendum on Scottish independence. Ms. May simply brushed aside the troublesome Scots, lecturing Ms. Sturgeon on how “now was not the time,” and refused to sign off on any referendum. For the Prime Minister, it's been downhill from there. In an effort to secure a working majority after the last election, Ms. May wrote the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland a cheque for £1-billion (\$1.76-billion): taxpayer money not going anywhere near Scotland.

30 Since then, Scots have continued inching away. Five months ago, tens of thousands of Scottish National Party (SNP) supporters marched through Edinburgh, ending with an independence rally next to the National Parliament. In January, hundreds of protesters were back to “stop the clock” on Brexit. Even Ms. Sturgeon has lashed out, calling the Brexit deal “grubby” and “shameless,” and fuming that the Tories “will stop at nothing to hold on to power.”

35 As the rhetoric intensifies, the chasm widens – and the Scots drift further. But it was not always like this. For decades, liberal Scotland was in sync with its more conservative neighbours. In 1975, Scots conformed to majority opinion and voted to stay in the European Community. The friendship seemed stable, the future rosy.

40 Enter Margaret Thatcher. As historian M.K. Thompson writes, most Scottish historians agree that Ms. Thatcher, through her reformation of the welfare state, treatment of striking miners and introduction of the poll tax, “helped polarize the political climate” between Scotland and the United Kingdom. Ms. May's actions have made things even worse. Earlier this month, the Prime Minister made headlines across Scotland when she allegedly told Ms. Sturgeon that she “wasn't bright enough” to understand her Brexit plan. (...)

45 We may be reaching the breaking point. The deputy leader of the SNP has proposed another independence referendum “with or without Westminster's approval.” Ms. Sturgeon told Sky News that if Scots are to be “taken out of the EU against our will, there's a mandate ... to give the people the choice of independence.” Brown Swan agrees. The divide over Brexit, she says, “is a clear example of divergence between Scotland and the rest of the U.K. (in particular England) and suggests that Scotland is being overruled by a majority.”

50 Is England worried about the possibility of losing Scotland? Dr. Keating doesn't think so. “People in England don't care if Scotland becomes independent,” he said. “They don't want it to happen, but compared with Canada and their attitude to Quebec, you'd be amazed at how relaxed they are at the prospect.”

55 With indifference from below, condescension from above and alienation all around, Scottish independence is increasingly attractive – and likely. On the ground, things are moving quickly: calls for a separate Scottish currency have surfaced, and the EU has pledged to maintain its Scotland office until further notice. Insults, rallies, mismanagement, anger: all of this suggests an increasingly tense, uncertain future for Scotland and the U.K. And Ms. May, faced with the Brexit mismatch and blooming Scottish nationalism, will need more than the power of prayer to patch it all up.

60 *Ted Fraser is a Canadian journalist currently living in Edinburgh.*

5 Right, brace yourself because I'm about to ruin your day. If you're standing up, sit down; if you're sitting down, lie down. If you haven't had breakfast, don't have breakfast yet and if you have had breakfast, I'm terribly sorry and can only suggest you make sure there are no obstacles between you and the smallest room in the house.

10 Ready? Okay, here we go: Nigel Farage is naked. I'll give you a minute to recover as that image oozes across your visual cortex before I explain what I mean.

15 What I mean by "Nigel Farage is naked" is that he is as the emperor in Andersen's fable. We can see this already - we've always seen it - and it's becoming harder for even his most glassy-eyed followers to deny. He's a one-trick pony and he's done the trick to death. Not that you'd get this from watching the television news or reading 60% of newspapers. It is getting to the point at which one almost expects our TV newsreaders to end each edition by turning to a side camera and saying: "Did you spot the deliberate mistake, viewers?"

20 This week's deliberate mistake has of course been to trumpet the showing of the Brexit Party Ltd (one must never forget that that's what it is; it's not a party, it's a profit-making limited company masquerading as one) in the recent European elections as some sort of electoral miracle and as clinching proof that the country is every bit as gung ho for Brexit (and, moreover, a no-deal Brexit) as ever.

25 Even a cursory objective glance at the numbers disproves this. Firstly, the support garnered by the Brexit Party Ltd is a scant improvement on the then-beFaraged UKIP's vote at the last European elections in 2014 and, as Remain activist Mike Galsworthy correctly points out, if you add the 2014 votes of all the now defunct anti-EU fringe parties which were, one can at least suppose, similarly absorbed by TBP Ltd then the increase all but disappears.

30 Meanwhile, the fact that the now Farageless UKIP's support has evaporated without him suggests that not only is TBP Ltd a rebrand rather than a resurgence, but that the Farage-era UKIP was in fact just the ego-trip/personality cult a lot of us suspected it was at the time. As many Remain pundits have pointed out, the votes of the avowedly anti-Brexit parties add up to far more than the combined votes of the no-deal parties, even if you don't add any Labour votes to the total. Indeed, nearly a million fewer people actually voted for the Farageistes than signed that 'Revoke Article 50' petition of a few months ago.

35 As for the two 'big' parties, I read that it's the worst showing in a national election for both Labour and the Conservatives since 1910 and 1832 respectively, and richly deserved on both counts.

40 Labour - or everyone in Labour except Jeremy Corbyn and Len McCluskey - seem finally to have realised that if you try to be all things to everyone you end up being nothing much to anyone. The smug 'Well who else are they going to vote for?' attitude to their own supporters has cost them as dearly as many of us predicted, and if the party doesn't get some humility and fast, the next general election could see them rendered as irrelevant south of the border as they already are to the north.

45 The Tories meanwhile, did as they always do in a time of crisis; they've regrouped, put aside all petty distractions and steeled themselves to the all-important task of spending the next few weeks tearing each other apart in a leadership contest. The smart money is inevitably on Boris Johnson, and if I can say something controversial: good. Before you deluge me with hate-email, let me explain: the one thing you can be sure of with Boris Johnson is that he lies. Whoever wins the Tory leadership will have to bang the no-deal drum to do so, but what distinguishes Boris from his rivals is that we can be sure he won't actually mean a word of it. (...)

50 But to return - as alas we must - to Farage; he's made a big mistake. By refusing to publish a manifesto, or even to announce any policy decisions other than on Brexit; by choosing to run TBP Ltd as a single position on a single issue 'party', he made these elections a proxy vote on no-deal. And by coming in at 31%, he lost. Badly. The figure of "17.4 million voted to Leave" will still be trotted out by Brexiteers on a tiresomely regular basis but it's going to ring rather hollower given that, offered the chance to reaffirm their position, 12.2 million of them, for whatever reason, chose not to.

Mitch Benn is an English comedian, author and musician, and a regular contributor to The New European

When Civility Is Used As A Cudgel Against People Of Color

KAREN GRIGSBY BATES *NPR (National Public Radio)*

March 14, 2019

The value of civility is one of the few things Americans can all agree on — right? That's the common assumption.

And yet it's an assumption that depends on everyone thinking they're a full member of the community.

But what about when they aren't?

For many people of color in the United States, civility isn't so much social lubricant as it is a vehicle for containing them, preventing social mobility and preserving the status quo. The furious white pushback at integrating lunch counters in the 1960s wasn't about the grilled cheese sandwiches that sit-in protesters weren't going to be served — it was about their presumption that they could sit at the counter at all. As equals.

That fury is why Alabama Gov. George Wallace could proclaim, "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation forever!"

Even after passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, some white people were still pushing back against demands for equality from black and brown communities. James Forman, a principal organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, had famously promised the people who wanted to go slow on integration that if blacks didn't have a seat at democracy's table soon, the entire table would be tossed. A few years later, as the Black Power movement gathered steam, activist H. Rap Brown told black Americans that they could ignore laws that were never meant to include them. "We did not make the laws in this country," he insisted. "We are neither morally or legally confined to those laws. Those laws that keep them up keep us down!"

Such laws and ordinances were designed to contain communities of color, says Gaye Theresa Johnson, who studies the intersection of civility and race at the University of California, Los Angeles. They allowed white citizens to, in effect, civilize people they considered less than.

And many assumed that this civilizing mission came from a higher authority. "It's always been a situation where people assume that civility is something that's sort of God ordained," Johnson says.

That belief would indicate that some people are innately civil, while others need to have civility taught to — or imposed upon — them. Johnson says this is part of the underlying rationale for the enslavement of Africans imported into America and the genocide of Native peoples.

"People of color don't get to orchestrate the terms of civility," she explains. "Instead, we're always responding to what civility is supposed to be."

So the relationship between alleged civilizers and the people they're "gifting" with civility, Johnson points out, is "inherently undemocratic, unequal and racist." (Think of Native American children being forcibly removed from their homes and placed in so-called Indian boarding schools or Mexican children being punished for speaking Spanish in schools or African-Americans being forced to listen to sermons that preached that servants should obey their masters, etc.)

And so, pushing back against the status quo will be seen as inherently uncivil by the people who want to maintain it. And there are always higher standards expected of those people pushing back.

Rutgers professor Brittney Cooper writes about white reaction to black anger in her book *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower*. Since the Black Lives Matter movement blossomed, Cooper says, the mere fact that blacks are protesting affects how white society sees those protests.

"Black anger, black rage, black distress over injustice is seen as, one, unreasonable and oversized; and, two, as a thing that must be neutralized and contained quickly." Cooper says this often takes the form of whites "preaching at black people about how they're bad and how they're ungrateful for being angry." [...]

San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem enraged many people — including President Trump. The upward spiral of unarmed black people (mostly men) who have been killed by (mostly) white policemen was unacceptable to the NFL star. He chose to kneel to bring attention to it, and that, says Harvard Law School professor Randall Kennedy, made a lot of the white public furious. "The idea that these *athletes* were addressing themselves to a burning political issue — that in and of itself made people mad," Kennedy says.

Kaepernick and other athletes who have chosen to protest social issues are angering people who believe they have strayed from their appointed place as athletes, Kennedy argues. These people want a ballgame, not a lecture — even a silent one.

But, Kennedy adds, by kneeling silently, Kaepernick was acting in the same dignified way civil rights demonstrators did in the 1960s: Students sitting quietly at lunchroom counters until they were dragged away, matrons shoved into police wagons, children being fire-hosed: All were quietly resisting what they believed was a societal wrong.

Kaepernick, Kennedy says, "was very vulnerable, and despite his vulnerability, he stood up in kneeling down. And I think in history he will go down as a hero."

As with so much, time changes things. Those students who had to be pulled away from lunch counters throughout the South were vilified back then. Today, many are considered heroes for their civil disobedience.

Hope for childless couples as MPs vote to end 'disgraceful' IVF postcode lottery that denies would-be parents the chance to have free treatment on the NHS

Martin Robinson, *Daily Mail*, 1 January 2019

5 Childless couples have been given fresh hope that 2019 will be the year where the NHS IVF postcode lottery will finally end. MPs will be asked to change the law to force all local health authorities in England to offer three free cycles of treatment. Currently only three areas give this assurance while the majority offer one course or even none at all, despite official guidance saying couples trying for a baby for two years should get three cycles.

10 Emma and Lee Edey, 44, from Colchester, Essex, were about to start IVF three years ago but the funding was axed. They won an appeal only for the cash to be withdrawn again, and the couple, who married nine years ago, are still waiting for their chance. Mrs Edey said: 'The last three years has been hell. I am praying the law goes through Parliament quickly'. She added in an interview with the Daily Mirror: 'None of us is any younger. I could have a three-year-old child now. Instead I am full of anger'.

The funding lottery in England forces couples to spend thousands on private treatment - but many more cannot afford to pursue their dream in this way.

20 IVF is only offered on the NHS if certain criteria are met. In 2013, the NICE published new fertility guidelines that made recommendations about who should have access to the treatment on the NHS in England and Wales. However, individual NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups make the final decision about who can access it in their local area, and their criteria may be stricter.

25 According to NICE, women aged under 40 should be offered three cycles of IVF treatment on the NHS if they've been trying to get pregnant through regular unprotected sex for two years, or they've not been able to get pregnant after 12 cycles of artificial insemination. If you turn 40 during treatment, the current cycle will be completed, but further cycles should not be offered. If tests show that IVF is the only treatment likely to help you get pregnant, you should be referred for IVF straight away.

30 Birmingham Labour MP Steve McCabe hopes his private member's bill to change the law could be passed by the end of 2019. Mr McCabe told the Mirror: 'Infertility is a medical condition and it is time we started treating it like one. It is simply unfair that access to IVF is down to where you live and not your medical need.'

35 The axing of IVF treatment comes despite guidance from the NHS group Nice (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) that women under 40 should be offered three cycles if they have been trying to conceive for two years. The number of centres no longer offering any cycles has increased from four to seven in the past 15 months. Clinical commissioning groups offering the recommended three cycles has fallen from 16% (33) to 11.5% (24) in a year.

40 Experts said patients now face a postcode lottery of services, with some families even moving across the country to find an area that offers three IVF treatment cycles. Others are travelling abroad for treatment. The Fertility Network UK had also heard of one family moving 200 miles from Berkshire, in the south-east of England, to Bury in Greater Manchester so they could get three cycles of IVF. (...)

45 Since last year, Herts Valleys and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) have removed all IVF services. Southend and west Essex have cut the number of cycles offered from two to one. Other CCGs have reduced the age limit for prospective fathers and same-sex partners to 52. The CCGs will now fund treatment only for couples where neither partner has a living child. In a bid to save £836,000 annually, Croydon last year became the first London borough to stop funding for IVF,

50 NHS Clinical Commissioners, the organisation that represents clinical commissioning groups, said: 'CCGs are led by GPs whose first priority is always to the patient. Wherever possible they want to give them what they need. Unfortunately, the NHS does not have unlimited resources ... there are some tough choices that have to be made. 'With huge pressures being felt across the whole health and care system, the NHS has to review services to ensure they are sustainable and improve the health of the wider population.'

Série: Langues vivantes

Langue: Anglais

Analyse LV2 d'un texte hors programme

So, what's the difference between Warren and Sanders?

By Elizabeth Bruenig Opinion columnist

The Washington Post June 12 at 6:14 PM

5 Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) quoted Martin Luther King Jr., saying "this country has socialism for the rich, rugged individualism for the poor."

7 Last time he ran for president, Bernie Sanders found himself odd man out in a race against Hillary Clinton, whose establishment bona fides and years of White House experience propelled her, in the end, to the nomination. But this cycle's primary map is unfolding along more nuanced lines, with two very progressive candidates, among 21 others, on offer. And it is becoming one of the key questions in the race: What is the

10 difference between Sanders (I-Vt.) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.)?

12 In a sense, Sanders's speech Wednesday in defense of democratic socialism seemed to answer that question at a moment when it feels most urgent. Warren has been gaining in polls lately, sealing her spot as a top-tier candidate in the crowded field and even running ahead of Sanders in a pair of new national polls. Though

15 her campaign stumbled through a rocky start, she has steadily earned a reputation as a dogged performer and a candidate with a plan — or with several plans, routinely offering up detailed policy proposals for solving problems from student debt to unaffordable child care. She also supports Medicare-for-all and has forsworn big campaign donors.

17 With all of those policy positions, there's little for a progressive stalwart to object to in Warren. But there's still a distinction to be drawn between her approach and Sanders's, and much of it comes down to the matter

20 of regulation vs. revolution.

22 For Warren, the solution to our economic ills already exists in well-regulated capitalism. "I believe in markets," she said in a recent podcast interview. "I believe in the benefits that come from markets, that two people coming together, or two companies, or a company and a person coming together to exchange goods

25 and services, yay." Warren believes today's socioeconomic ills are the result of high concentrations of power and wealth that can be resolved with certain regulatory tools and interventions. If corporate chief executives and financiers behave badly, she says, we should jail them — no special rules for the rich. If companies grow so large that they exert undue control over our markets and our lives, the government should break them up. If companies ignore consumers and employees to benefit

30 shareholders, eliminate their incentives with regulatory curbs.

32 But for Sanders, those solutions come up short. For a number of reasons — alienation and disengagement among the electorate, and the extraordinary power of big business and finance over government — he doesn't believe that even the cleverest, most uniformly applied regulations will solve what he views as a political and economic crisis. Instead, he aims to transfer power over several key segments of life to the

35 people — by creating a set of universal economic rights that not only entitle citizens to particular benefits (such as medical care, education and child care) but also give those citizens a say in how those sectors are governed: in short, democratic socialism. And that means building a movement, not just a presidential campaign.

37 When I spoke to Sanders earlier this week, I asked him why he's making democratic socialism a mainstay of his campaign when the term seems to scare away so many of his like-minded progressives. "A lot of people

40 in this country have given up on the political process because they hear a lot of politicians saying good things," Sanders told me, "but somehow or another that change never happens. You know, in my sleep I could write a speech which says got to do this, got to do that — but how do you really do that? You need a political revolution where millions of people are prepared to stand up to the power structure of

45 America." Warren proposes canceling billions in student loan debt

47 For Sanders, the programs he's advancing — Medicare-for-all, free public college tuition, universal child care and pre-K — aren't just meant to help struggling Americans; they're designed to bring millions of disaffected citizens back to politics and mobilize them to protect what Sanders calls their "economic rights."

50 Sanders continued: "The powers of the corporate elite are such that we cannot . . . bring about the real profound changes I want to see — unless there is the involvement of millions and millions of people in the political process." And that means building a distinct, mobilized political movement with its own identity and independent energy.

52 None of that will be easy, especially when Sanders is no longer in a two-person race and others are borrowing his policy ideas, if not his overall goals. But for those who see our political moment as a crisis greater in breadth and content than a few unenforced or misbegotten laws, Sanders's wide-ranging, historical

55 approach may have greater appeal on its second try than its first.

Alabama abortion ban: Republican state senate passes most restrictive law in US

Erin Durkin in *Montgomery, Alabama*, and Jessica Glenza in *New York*

THE GUARDIAN Wed 15 May 2019

Alabama's Republican-controlled state senate passed a bill Tuesday to outlaw abortion, making it a crime to perform the procedure at any stage of pregnancy. The strictest-in-the-nation abortion ban allows an exception only when the woman's health is at serious risk, and sets up a legal battle that supporters hope will lead to the supreme court overturning its landmark ruling that legalized abortion nationwide. The measure contains no exception for rape and incest, after lawmakers voted down an amendment Tuesday that would have added such an exception. The legislation, which passed by a vote of 25-6, makes it a class A felony for a doctor to perform an abortion, punishable by 10 to 99 years in prison. Women would not face criminal penalties for getting an abortion. It goes further than any other state has to restrict abortion. Other states, including neighboring Georgia, have instituted bans on abortion after about six weeks into pregnancy.

The vote came after a battle broke out over whether to allow legal abortions for women who become pregnant due to rape or incest, an issue that divided Republicans who otherwise supported outlawing abortion. Last week, chaos erupted on the floor when Republican leaders stripped out the rape exception without a roll call vote, leading the final vote to be postponed. It got a full vote on Tuesday, but ultimately failed. Lawmakers approved the legislation after a debate that stretched more than four hours, where minority Democrats introduced a slew of amendments in an attempt to block it.

"You don't have to raise that child. You don't have to carry that child. You don't have to provide for that child. You don't have to do anything for that child, but yet you want to make the decision for that woman," the state senator Vivian Davis Figures told the bill's proponents. She introduced amendments that would require the state to expand Medicaid, force legislators who vote for the measure to pay the state's legal bills, or make it a crime for men to get vasectomies. All failed. Figures questioned the backers' resistance to adding an exception for rape and incest. "Do you know what it's like to be raped?" she said. "Why would you not want a woman to at least have that exception for such a horrific act?"

The bill has already passed the house. It must now be signed by the state's governor, Kay Ivey. The legislation is poised for an immediate legal challenge and to be overturned at least by the lower courts. The ACLU and Planned Parenthood "will file a lawsuit to stop this unconstitutional ban and protect every woman's right to make her own choice about her healthcare, her body, and her future. This bill will not take effect anytime in the near future, and abortion will remain a safe, legal medical procedure at all clinics in Alabama," the ACLU of Alabama said on Tuesday.

"Alabama politicians will forever live in infamy for this vote," said Staci Fox, the president of Planned Parenthood Southeast Advocates, in a statement. "In the coming days we will be mounting the fight of our lives – we will take this to court and ensure abortion remains safe and legal."

Backers of the ban are hoping the fight will go all the way to the supreme court, which ruled in the 1973 *Roe v Wade* case that women must be allowed to get abortions up to the point where the fetus can survive outside the womb.

"Human life has rights, and when someone takes those rights, that's when we as government have to step in," said the state senator Clyde Chambliss. "When God creates that life, that miracle of life inside the woman's womb, it's not our place as humans to extinguish that life. That's what I believe."

The bill's architects resisted the rape exception, saying they wanted a clean ban to present to the courts, and believed exceptions would violate the principle that an unborn child is a human life. [...]

The bill is part of a trend across the US in which Republican-controlled states are attempting to put new restrictions on abortion, gambling that they will fare better in the courts following the confirmation of new federal judges and supreme court justices picked by the Trump administration. Opponents predict the legislation will drive doctors to leave Alabama, which already has some of the highest rates of infant mortality and cervical cancer.

Outside the Alabama statehouse, protesters wore costumes from *The Handmaid's Tale* and carried signs, one reading: "Alabama does not own me."

Republicans, who have a super-majority in the chamber, carried the vote by a large margin, but the debate was dominated by Democrats objecting to the legislation, while few supporters spoke out on the floor. The Senate minority leader, Bobby Singleton, launched a filibuster in an effort to delay the vote, until Republicans approved a motion to end debate. "You just raped the state of Alabama," he said. "The state of Alabama ought to be ashamed of itself." The message to women, he added, is: "We're just going to continue to kick 'em in the gut." As the vote was called, he concluded: "I would just like to say to all the women of the state of Alabama, I'm sorry."

Feminists with a bullet: how the ageing heroine became screen gold

As a greying Linda Hamilton dusts off the rocket launcher to take on a new Terminator, we look at how the cowering victims of 70s horror paved the way for today's grizzled gunslingers

5 **Noah Berlatsky**

The GUARDIAN Thu 30 May 2019

The trailer for Terminator: Dark Fate hinges on the return of Linda Hamilton's Sarah Connor to the franchise. Halfway into it, she steps from an SUV with not one but two guns so big that the trailer slips into slow-mo in sheer awe. "Who are you?" another character gasps.

10 Sixty-two year old women don't usually get to be action stars. It's common for guys like Clint Eastwood, Bruce Willis, Harrison Ford and Arnold Schwarzenegger to tote firearms and perform stunts into their 50s, 60s, even 70s. But women in action films are typically younger than their co-stars, often by decades. In last year's Mission: Impossible – Fallout, Tom Cruise was 55; female lead Rebecca Ferguson was 35.

15 Hamilton's star turn in Dark Fate is the latest sign, though, that things may be starting to change. Jamie Lee Curtis, who is 60, starred in a reboot of Halloween last year. Sandra Bullock, who played the lead in the Netflix hit Bird Box, is 54. Trevante Rhodes, who played her boyfriend, is only 29.

Older female stars are finally getting big action roles because younger women started to get them 30 or 40 years ago. Halloween in 1978 and Terminator in 1984 were part of a wave of movies in which women heroes got to do what male heroes had so often done before: pick up guns and blast away.

20 Yet those early films came out of a tradition that was not exactly feminist in intention. Halloween and Terminator were variations on the slasher genre made famous by Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho in 1960. Part of Psycho's horror was based in a misogynist fear of gender confusion: the villain in the movie is a mentally disturbed man who dresses up as his own mother. Picking up on those themes, the suspense

25 film Deliverance (1972) – a huge influence on later slashers – depicted a male rape. The slasher was a genre in which horror cut people loose from gender; much of the disgust, the terror, and the enjoyment was in the way that fear made men into women and women into men.

John Carpenter's Halloween extended the gender play by making its protagonist, Laurie Strode, a tomboyish high-school student. Laurie is first pursued by killer Michael Myers in typical stalking fashion, but eventually she turns the tables, picking up the phallic knife and becoming the attacker. Laurie is the prototype of what Carol Clover called the "final girl": the last character alive in a slasher – almost always a woman – who claims the role of violent victor.

30 The final girl gradually moved into the mainstream with characters like Sigourney Weaver's Ripley in Alien (1979) and Sarah Connor in Terminator(1984), two sci-fi-inflected slashers. That helped pave the way for more straightforward action movie heroines, often with more explicit feminist messaging, as in the recent Wonder Woman and Captain Marvel films.

35 The success of those early slashers also created the opportunity for their stars to take up their roles again for sequels. Hamilton returning to play Connor again, or Curtis playing Laurie, is an event, just like Schwarzenegger reprising his turn as the Terminator or Harrison Ford coming back as Han Solo. The success of the earlier films mean their stars are still beloved and bankable.

40 As the Halloween reboot showed, slasher tropes work just as well with older actresses in the main role – if not better. The Final Girl is all about reversing power dynamics. The horror of the pursuit is greater because women are figured as weak and helpless, and the conclusion is more exciting because of the rush of the power reversal. Older women set up an even more visceral victory. Laurie by the end of the 2018 Halloween becomes more mythic even than Michael Myers. The seesaw excitement of disempowerment/empowerment is part of why Bird Box, a movie about a mature who has to blindfold herself to fight mysterious assailants, captured the imagination.

45 The creators of the early slasher films certainly weren't trying to expand roles for older women in Hollywood. But pushing against stereotypes can have unexpected benefits. Because of choices some film-makers and actors made three decades ago, it now seems natural to watch a 60-year-old woman lock horns with a killer robot. When you start telling different stories with different heroes, you don't know where you'll end up, or who will get to hold the rocket launcher.

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Labour weighs up delisting UK firms if they fail to fight climate change

John McDonnell's tough message likely to trip City alarm bells as party puts climate battle at heart of agenda

Richard Partington,
The Guardian, 10 May 2019

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UK companies failing to tackle climate change would be delisted from the London Stock Exchange under radical plans for greening the economy being drawn up by Labour. John McDonnell, the shadow chancellor, said he would consider changing the law if necessary to force UK-listed firms to take adequate steps to fight the "climate emergency" facing the planet.

10

In an interview with the Guardian, McDonnell said much of the City was already aware of the need to make faster progress towards a zero-carbon economy, but his proposals were about "weeding out those that are not taking it seriously". "We've got to signal now that we're being serious about tackling climate change. And we're going to use every lever of government we possibly can to enable that to happen," he said.

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The shadow chancellor said that as a backbench MP he had proposed that the criteria for a listing a company on the stock exchange should include human rights, trade union rights and environmental policy. "We're now going to discuss how we can insert tackling climate change as one of the criteria for listing on the London stock market."

20

Labour's proposals are likely to set alarm bells ringing in the City, home to some of the world's biggest natural resource companies. But the shadow chancellor said the measures were justified by the scale of the climate change challenge. "It's not about threatening or penalising, it's saying here's the steps we need to take to save the planet, it's as simple as that," he said.

25

The steps to banish egregious polluters from the City form part of wider Labour plans to place climate change at the heart of its agenda for government, as the party readies for a possible autumn election. Should an election be called and the party win power, McDonnell said he would help form a "red-green" government and help push Britain to a low-carbon economy. "There's a sweeping understanding, right the way across, that our administration has to tackle this issue in a way that no one else is taking that seriously," he said.

30

Labour has a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050, or earlier if possible, while Jeremy Corbyn has acted to declare a formal climate emergency. McDonnell suggested that if he became chancellor before a successor was chosen for Mark Carney, the Bank's outgoing governor, he would seek to install a radical thinker who could lead the fight for greening the economy. "We do need someone fresh. We need someone who's got an understanding of the challenges and climate change is a key one. And we need someone who is willing to be radical," he said.

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The shadow chancellor said he had been impressed by Carney's attempts to drive climate change up the agenda and that someone was required to push the issue to the next stage. "That does need some radical thinking," he said. Carney used an article in the Guardian last month to warn that the global financial system faces an existential threat from climate change and needs reform. The governor is set to leave Threadneedle Street early next year. The search for his successor is due to conclude by October.

40

McDonnell has previously said the Bank's powers to tackle climate change risks in the financial system could be overhauled, as well as measures handing Threadneedle Street a target for raising productivity growth in the UK economy. Possible measures could include forcing banks to increase the financial reserves they hold to protect against losses for carbon assets.

45

McDonnell said he thought the finance sector was ready for the changes, as growing numbers of investment management firms signal they will alter investing rules to take account of climate change. "The debate is beginning to change. The writing is on the wall and they're going to see opportunities in the mechanisms for tackling climate change as well," McDonnell said. "We want to signal change is coming and we're serious about climate change."

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An Era Defined by Fear: The emotional tone underneath the political conflicts.

By David Brooks Opinion Columnist

The NEW YORK TIMES April 29, 2019

5 Another synagogue shooting. Another day of shock. Another lonely fanatic. Another cascade of insecurity and fear.

I wonder if we've fully grasped how fear pervades our society and sets the emotional tone for our politics. When historians define this era they may well see it above all else as a time defined by fear. The era began on Sept. 11, 2001, a moment when a nation that had once seemed invulnerable suddenly felt tremendously unsafe. In the years since, the shootings have been a series of bloody strikes out of the blue.

10 It's been an era when politicians rise by stoking fear. Donald Trump declared an "American carnage" and made it to the White House by warning of an immigrant crime wave that doesn't exist.

Fear also comes up from below, in the form of childhood trauma and insecurity. It sometimes seems as if half of America's children grow up in strained families and suffer Adverse Childhood Experiences that make it hard for them to feel safe. The other half grow up in overprotective families and emerge into adulthood unready to face the risks that will inevitably come. Depression rates rise. Safe spaces proliferate. Collegiate mental health systems are overwhelmed.

15 We in the media have contributed too. Everybody is a broadcast journalist now, competing for ratings and page views. The sure way to win is to ratchet up the crisis atmosphere. All news is Breaking News!

20 We get to the point where the fear itself begins to take control. Fear generates fear. Everybody feels besieged — power is somehow elsewhere, with the malevolent forces who are somewhere out there, who will stop at nothing. Fear puts a dark filter over everything. The fearful person is unable to hear good news, while any possible threat looms large. We are in the middle of one of the longest economic booms in our history, with wages finally rising again for the middle class. But nobody feels that because of the sense that it's all about to come crashing down. Fear runs ahead of the facts and inflames the imagination. Ninety percent of the time we're not afraid of what's

25 happening to us, but of some catastrophic thing our imagination tells us might happen. Fear makes everything amorphous. Immigration is a phenomenon that has concrete advantages and concrete disadvantages. But for those in the grip of fear, immigration — or globalization, Silicon Valley, Wall Street or automation — are shapeless, insidious forces that are out of control. The inevitable reaction is overreaction. Fear stokes anger, which then stokes more fear. Anger is the child of fear, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum writes in her book, "The Monarchy of Fear." The fearful person turns asocial, rejects any compassionate response to social problems and instead lashes out.

30 "Fear, indeed, is intensely narcissistic," she continues. "It drives out all thoughts of others." The fearful person doesn't see particular individuals, just hateful shades who arouse disgust and can be blamed. Muslims are disgusting. Immigrants are disgusting. Republicans are disgusting. The irrationalities of disgust, Nussbaum continues, underlie many social evils.

35 Fear induces herding behavior. For my last column I went back and read some profiles of Joe Biden written in the 1970s and 1980s. I was stunned to see how free-flowing they were, how little the authors were tied down by ideological rigidity and tribal mentality. I was reminded how much we've all clenched up, how much we all now seem to be members of this or that cult — fearful of saying something "wrong," fearful of provoking a Twitter backlash, mindlessly repeating the clichés that signal to others that we are faithfully staying within the barricades of our tribe.

40 Fear revives ideology. The 20th century saw a clash of iron-grip ideologies. Then, about 10 years ago, we seemed to be entering the age of the data wonks. The students in my classes didn't have faith in all-explaining dogmas. Skeptical, they just wanted the evidence.

45 But now grand ideologies clash by night: white nationalism, populism, oppression studies. All trade in binaries between oppressor and oppressed, the struggle between the good groups and the menacing evil ones. They say that perfect love casts out fear. And maybe there is at least one presidential candidate who will perform the role Franklin Roosevelt performed 86 years ago — identify fear as its own independent force and confront it with hope and optimism.

50 But I'm coming to think governance might be cure. The simple act of trying to solve practical problems. Enough with charisma. Enough with politicians who treat each election as a matter of metaphysical survival, a clash of existential identities. I've developed a hankering for slightly boring politicians who just get stuff done — Mayor Mike Duggan of Detroit, Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland. I might agree or disagree with some of Elizabeth Warren's zillions of policy proposals, but at least they're proposals. At least they are attempts to ground our

55 politics in real situations with actual plans, not just overwrought bellowing about the monster in the closet. Fear comes in the night. But eventually you have to wake up in the morning, get out of bed and get stuff done.

Facebook to ban anti-vaxx ads in new push against 'vaccine hoaxes'
Julia Carrie Wong in San Francisco

The Guardian, Thu 7 Mar 2019

5 Facebook will no longer allow advertisements that include misinformation about vaccines as part of an effort to reduce the spread of “vaccine hoaxes” on the platform, the company announced on Thursday.

Facebook will also diminish the reach of groups and pages that spread anti-vaccine misinformation by reducing their ranking in search results and on the News Feed, removing them from autofill suggestions in the search bar, and removing them from recommendation features such as “Groups You Should Join”.

10 The company’s announcement follows increased scrutiny of the role that social media platforms play in amplifying and financing the anti-vaccine movement.

Anti-vaccine propaganda has been going viral on the internet, just as measles is surging in the real world. The US is combatting measles outbreaks in under-vaccinated communities in the Pacific north-west, New York and Texas, while measles cases in Europe doubled from 2017 to 2018 and major outbreaks have hit the Phillippines and Japan.

15 The World Health Organization named vaccine hesitancy – “the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines” – as one of the top threats to global health in 2019.

On 1 February, the Guardian reported that all of the top 12 Facebook groups and eight of the top 12 Facebook pages surfaced by a search for “vaccination” advocated against vaccines. That report prompted the Democratic congressman Adam Schiff, the chair of the US House intelligence committee, to write a letter to Mark Zuckerberg urging the company to take action against vaccine misinformation.

20 Networks of closed Facebook groups with tens of thousands of members or more have become loci for anti-vaccine activism and propaganda, including targeted harassment campaigns against pro-vaccine practitioners. Anti-vaccine propagandists have also been using Facebook’s advertising tools to target mothers with fearmongering misinformation about vaccines. And the platform included targeting categories that enabled advertisers to promote content to nearly 900,000 people that Facebook had deemed to be interested in “vaccine controversies”, the Guardian revealed, as well as other categories related to the anti-vaxx movement.

25 Those advertising categories will now be removed, Facebook said, and advertisers who repeatedly violate the ban on vaccine misinformation may have their ad accounts disabled.

In enforcing the new policy, Facebook plans to rely on organizations such as the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to define “verifiable vaccine hoaxes”. Among the most tenacious of these false beliefs is the discredited idea that the vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella causes autism. It does not.

30 “If these vaccine hoaxes appear on Facebook, we will take action against them,” Facebook’s head of global policy, Monika Bickert, wrote in a blogpost. “For example, if a group or Page admin posts this vaccine misinformation, we will exclude the entire group or Page from recommendations, reduce these groups and Pages’ distribution in News Feed and Search, and reject ads with this misinformation.”

35 The policy change will also extend to Instagram, where misinformation about vaccines will be excluded from recommendations on the “Instagram Explore” or on hashtag pages.

The company is also considering ways to include accurate information about vaccines within the site, such as “at the top of results for related searches, on Pages discussing the topic, and on invitations to join groups about the topic”.

40 Facebook’s efforts against anti-vaccine misinformation have lagged behind other social media platforms. Pinterest, the visual social network particularly popular among women, explicitly banned the “promotion of false cures for terminal or chronic illnesses and anti-vaccination advice” in 2017, as part of a larger policy against misinformation that “has immediate and detrimental effects on a pinner’s health or on public safety”.

As part of that policy, the platform banned a number of large anti-vaxx boards and disallowed “pins” from the URLs of websites that specialize in health misinformation, such as StopMandatoryVaccination.com. They also “broke” the search tool for certain phrases such as “vaccine” because the results were known to be “polluted”.

45 YouTube announced in late January that it was reworking its recommendation algorithm to reduce the number of videos that “could misinform users in harmful ways” – a policy that includes some anti-vaccine misinformation. The company also demonetized a number of anti-vaxxer YouTube channels following a report by BuzzFeed News, removing the financial incentive for propagandists.

50 Following a letter from Schiff on 1 March, Amazon removed several anti-vaccine propaganda movies from its streaming video service.

In a statement Thursday, Schiff said he was “pleased” that Google, Facebook and Amazon “are taking this issue seriously and acknowledged their responsibility to provide quality health information to their users”. Google is YouTube’s parent company.

55 “The crucial test will be whether the steps outlined by Google and Facebook do in fact reduce the spread of anti-vaccine content on their platforms, thereby making it less likely to reach users who are simply seeking quality, fact-based health information for their children and families,” he added.

A first royal baby with an African heritage? Not quite, but this is still a great step towards modernity

Harry Mount, *The Telegraph*, 6 May 2019

5 With the birth of Meghan Markle's baby boy, the Royal family has taken a giant leap forward in reflecting modern Britain.

The United Kingdom has been an ever more multiracial society ever since the war. But the new arrival will still be the first major member of the Royal family to have African-American blood.

10 The Sussex baby won't be the first member of the Firm to have African blood, though. Queen Charlotte, George III's wife, almost certainly had African genes, thanks to her ancestor, Alfonso III of Portugal, who took the city of Faro back from the Moors in the 13th century and had a son by the daughter of the Moor governor.

15 But that was a link shared across the span of half a millennium. With the Sussex baby, you have something much more remarkable: a monarch's great-grandchild who is not only of African descent but also descended from African slaves.

20 Critics of monarchy have scoffed at the idea that this is exceptional news. White British people have been intermarrying with black British people for decades. Why should the arrival of the Sussex baby boy be any different from the arrival of millions of other babies with mixed heritage in this country?

25 Yes, it's true that the Royal Family are behind the times, as they have always been. In 1923, the Queen Mother was the first commoner to marry a future king since Anne Hyde married James II 250 years before. In 1937, the former Edward VIII was the first king, albeit an ex-one, to marry a divorcee - an American divorcee, too, like Meghan, though, unlike Meghan, his wife, Wallis Simpson, never had children. And in 2011, Prince William was the first direct-in-line heir to the throne to marry a bride without a title in the modern age.

30 Kate Middleton had to face some shockingly snobbish remarks then, as Meghan Markle has had to deal with some dreadful racism - either through evil trolls online or through racism masked as snobbery or raised eyebrows at her supposed misunderstanding of royal conventions.

35 In each of these breakthroughs, the Royal family has been late to repeat what had become commonplace in everyday British society. That isn't surprising. The Royal family is, by its very nature, a conservative institution; not least because it has managed to maintain itself and its institutions for 1,000 years.

It also tends to be led by a fairly old figure, given the clan is led by a hereditary ruler until death. Progress made by younger generations, like the Sussexes, will tend to be at several generations' remove from the monarch.

40 But even when the Royal family adopts a progressive measure decades after the people at large, it acts as a rubber stamp, giving the highest end of society's approval to a shift in values. Britain may be a multicultural society and it may be one where relations are more harmonious than in many other countries. But it would be foolish to deny there are still racial divisions in this country. Only last week, Nigel Farage sought to make political hay for his Brexit party by exploiting racial divisions in the North of England. Only last week, too, I was told by a black friend that she could still hear a momentary pause in conversation when she walked into an all-white restaurant in Cornwall recently.

45 The birth of the Sussex boy makes a significant blow against that kind of shocked reaction to a non-white face in a white place. In a very short period, Meghan Markle has had a seismic effect on the Royal family, as a mixed-race, American TV star. And yet, barely a year since her wedding, she has become part of the royal furniture. She has created a new royal normal. And the new baby will, in time, also utterly change global perceptions of our ruling family. Many congratulations to the new parents and welcome to the latest addition to the most successful, adaptable Royal family the world has ever seen.

55 *Harry Mount is author of How England Made the English (Viking).*

It's un-British to roll out the red carpet for Donald Trump

Sadiq Khan, *The Observer*, 1 Jun 2019

5 Praising the “very fine people on both sides” when torch-wielding white supremacists and antisemites marched through the streets clashing with anti-racist campaigners. Threatening to veto a ban on the use of rape as a weapon of war. Setting an immigration policy that forcefully separates young children from their parents at the border. The deliberate use of xenophobia, racism and “otherness” as an electoral tactic. Introducing a travel ban to a number of predominately Muslim countries. Lying deliberately and repeatedly to the public.

10 No, these are not the actions of European dictators of the 1930s and 40s. Nor the military juntas of the 1970s and 80s. I'm not talking about Vladimir Putin or Kim Jong-un. These are the actions of the leader of our closest ally, the president of the United States of America. This is a man who tried to exploit Londoners' fears following a horrific terrorist attack on our city, amplified the tweets of a British far-right racist group, denounced as fake news robust scientific evidence warning of the dangers of climate change, and is now trying to interfere shamelessly in the Conservative party leadership race by backing Boris Johnson because he believes it would enable him to gain an ally in Number 10 for his divisive agenda.

15 Donald Trump is just one of the most egregious examples of a growing global threat. The far right is on the rise around the world, threatening our hard-won rights and freedoms and the values that have defined our liberal, democratic societies for more than seventy years. Viktor Orbán in Hungary, Matteo Salvini in Italy, Marine Le Pen in France and Nigel Farage here in the UK are using the same divisive tropes of the fascists of the 20th century to garner support, but are using new sinister methods to deliver their message. And they are gaining ground and winning power and influence in places that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

20 They are intentionally pitting their own citizens against one another, regardless of the horrific impact in our communities. They are picking on minority groups and the marginalised to manufacture an enemy – and encouraging others to do the same. And they are constructing lies to stoke up fear and to attack the fundamental pillars of a healthy democracy – equality under the law, the freedom of the press and an independent justice system. Trump is seen as a figurehead of this global far-right movement. Through his words and actions, he has given comfort to far-right political leaders, and it's no coincidence that his former campaign manager, Steve Bannon, has been touring the world, spreading hateful views and bolstering the far right wherever he goes.

25 That's why it's so un-British to be rolling out the red carpet this week for a formal state visit for a president whose divisive behaviour flies in the face of the ideals America was founded upon – equality, liberty and religious freedom. There are some who argue that we should hold our noses and stomach the spectacle of honouring Trump in this fashion – including many Conservative politicians. They say we need to be realists and stroke his ego to maintain our economic and military relationship with the US. But at what point should we stop appeasing – and implicitly condoning – his far-right policies and views? Where do we draw the line?

30 Rather than bestowing Trump with a grand platform of acceptability to the world, we should be speaking out and saying that this behaviour is unacceptable – and that it poses a grave threat to the values and principles we have fought hard to defend – often together – for decades. I am proud of our historic special relationship, which I'm certain will survive long after President Trump leaves office. The US is a country I love and have visited on many occasions. I still greatly admire the culture, the people and the principles articulated by the founding fathers. But America is like a best friend, and with a best friend you have a responsibility to be direct and honest when you believe they are making a mistake. (...)

35 It's too late to stop the red-carpet treatment, but it's not too late for the prime minister to do the right thing. Theresa May should issue a powerful rejection – not of the US as a country or the office of the presidency, but of Trump and the far-right agenda he embodies. She should say that the citizens of the UK and the US agree on many things, but that Trump's views are incompatible with British values.

45 History teaches us of the danger of being afraid to speak truth to power and the risk of failing to defend our values from the rise of the far right. At this challenging time in global politics, it's more important than ever that we remember that lesson.

Sadiq Khan is the mayor of London.

Britain's real democratic crisis? The broken link between voters and MPs

Politicians have little in common with the people who pay for them. It's a national failure that they fail to reflect their views

Aditya Chakraborty, March 20th 2019, *The Guardian*

5 You may have heard that Britain is in crisis. Indeed, there's a good chance that you will have heard little else. Turn on the TV, flick on the radio, glance across the front pages, and one word will be splashed over and over again. Some mornings it seems the UK is under aerial bombardment from a noun.

10 But what a funny, contained emergency it is, full of Westminster people doing Westminster maths and deploying their Westminster terms. It is as if someone has drawn a thick red line along the perimeter of the parliamentary estate and labelled it, in big and self-important letters: National Crisis. Look at the politicians and pundits cramming the studio sofas, chattering about John Bercow and processology, swapping a Cooper-Boles for an Erskine May, and so excited that they crackle like acrylic jumpers.

15 In this way, an extraordinarily serious moment for the country is shrunk to fit our TV screens. A national vote precipitated this mess, don't forget – one in which the then prime minister, the leader of the opposition, the Bank of England, the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress united to give their solemn advice, and still the stubborn voters rebelled. Yet stick on the BBC on any given Sunday morning, and it is as if the revolution of 1789 was being covered entirely from inside the Versailles court of Louis XVI.

20 That vast disconnect between elite authority and lived experience is central to what's broken in Britain today. Why is a stalemate among 650 MPs a matter for such concern, yet the slow, grinding extinction of mining communities and light-industrial suburbs passed over in silence? Why does May's wretched career cover the first 16 pages of a Sunday paper while a Torbay woman told by her council that she can "manage being homeless", and even sleeping rough, is granted a few inches downpage? Oh, some may say, they have no connection. Except that the death sentence handed to stretches of the country and the vindictive spending cuts imposed by the former chancellor George Osborne are a large part of why Britain voted for Brexit in the first place.

25 A couple of years ago, a woman from Newcastle greeted warnings that leaving the EU would damage the economy by shouting: "That's your bloody GDP. Not ours." In the same spirit of blunt truth-telling, we should tell Westminster that this is *their* bloody crisis – not ours. But we have long suffered under a crisis in how we are governed. We have economic policymakers who can't grasp how the economy has changed, elected politicians who share hardly anything in common with their own voters, and journalists who too often display a remarkable incuriousness about the country they are meant to be reporting on.

30 Over a decade from the banking crash, the failings of our economic policymaking need little elaboration. The state's economists have spent the past 10 years forecasting a magnificent recovery that never actually turned up. Meanwhile, the basic language of economic policy makes less and less sense. Growth no longer brings prosperity; you can work your socks off and still not earn a living. Yet councils and governments across the UK will spend billions on rail lines, and use taxpayers' money to bribe billionaire investors, all in the name of growth and jobs – no matter how poor the quality. It is called economic policy. It looks more and more like ripping off the public.

35 That breakdown between policy and outcome ought to be reflected in our politics. The fact that it is not is down to the narrowing of our political class. Reviewing the backgrounds of the MPs elected in 2017, Channel 4 News found that over half had come from backgrounds in politics, law, or business and finance. In fact, more MPs come from finance alone than from social work, the military, engineering and farming put together. That winnowing-out of other trades and ways of life has a direct consequence on our law-making. A University College London study published last year shows that as the parliamentary Labour party became more "careerist" under Tony Blair, it also grew increasingly fond of slashing welfare. Social security was not something these professionalised MPs or their circle had ever had to rely on, so why not attack scroungers and win a few swing voters?

45 This is what a real democratic crisis looks like: failed policies forced down the throats of a public whose own representatives don't get them, and whose media see them only as fodder for vox pops. Institution after institution failing to legislate, reflect or report on the very people who pay for them to exist. This is the very definition of national failure. And until it is even acknowledged, Britain will be stuck, seething with resentment, in a political quagmire.

The quest to remake British politics

The Economist, Sep 27th 2018

Pity the disaffected British voter who looks to the autumn conferences for inspiration. Both the main parties are hypnotised by Brexit. Labour, which gathered this week in Liverpool, tried to fudge its position only to fall into more bickering. The Conservatives, who will meet in Birmingham next week, are so divided over Europe that they are openly conspiring to oust their own prime minister. The earthquake of the referendum two years ago has energised Britain's parties like nothing else — and crowded out debate on everything else.

However, at last there are signs that politicians are starting to think about the direction that Britain should take after it leaves the EU. Some of the fundamental ideas that have underpinned Western governments of all stripes for decades are being questioned from right and left. A party which could come up with persuasive answers would stand to dominate British politics for many years. And just as the Brexit rebellion has been followed by populist revolts in other countries, so the ideas fermenting in Britain may well spread. Some of them are promising; others downright dangerous.

The Leave campaign's demand to "take back control" resonated because it applied to more than just Britain's relationship with Europe. It chimed with those sick of a hyper-centralised state, where feeble councils take marching orders from an out-of-touch London. It tapped into growing anger at the outsourcing of public services to remote and incompetent private companies. It pointed to the firms that bypass employment law by treating staff as "gig" workers with few rights. And it reflected a feeling of impotence in the face of a system of global capitalism which, ten years ago, sent Britain into recession after bankers thousands of miles away mis-sold securities that no one, including themselves, understood.

On becoming prime minister in 2016, Theresa May assured voters that she had heard their cry, and boldly vowed to reshape "the forces of liberalism and globalisation which have held sway...across the Western world." She has not kept this promise. Her lack of imagination, squandered majority and the all-consuming Brexit negotiations—the ones with her party, rather than the EU—mean that, more than two years on from their great howl, the British people have seen nothing in return. When Brexit day comes next March, and Britain is left with either a bad deal or with no deal at all, the call for revolutionary change will not have been sated—it will be stronger than ever.

Alarming, the camp readiest to answer that call is a Labour Party marching ever further and more confidently to the left. Many of the ideas in its manifesto last year recast old policies, such as renationalising the railways, which would not answer the fundamental new questions being asked of the state. But since then Labour's economic plan has evolved. The shadow chancellor, John McDonnell proposes "the greatest extension of economic democratic rights that this country has ever seen".

Mr McDonnell correctly identifies that power has drained from labour towards capital in recent years. But his proposals to redress this balance would see the state strong-arm its way deeply into the economy. Companies would have to nominate workers to make up a third of their boards, while pay would be determined by collective bargaining. Ten per cent of companies' equity would be expropriated and put in funds managed by workers' representatives, that would become the largest shareholders in many of the biggest firms. Workers would receive some dividends, but the majority would go to the government. The Treasury would be "reprogrammed" to channel money to favoured industries. Coupled with a plan to raise the minimum wage so that it embraces 60% of employees under 25, the package represents a transfer of power not just to workers but also to the state and the unions.

The Tories have been slower to regroup, but they too are teeming with ideas. Some want to dust off the free-market principles of Thatcherism and apply them to new areas, lifting planning restrictions to encourage housebuilding, say.

These ideas could mark a dramatic break with the past. But whereas an insurgent Labour has united behind a growing list of detailed plans, the Tories' thoughts are ill-defined, and the party far from agreed on which to pursue.

What does the Irish border have to do with Brexit?

The Economist, Dec 18th 2018

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is due to leave the European Union on March 29th 2019. The Republic of Ireland, meanwhile, will continue to be a member of the club. So for the first time the EU will have an external border on the island of Ireland.

The need to keep this 500km (310-mile) border open and invisible has become one of the central problems of Brexit.

At the moment 110m people and 72m vehicles use more than 200 crossing points every year to pass over the frontier. Most might barely notice the border, except perhaps for spotting that the speed-limit signs are in miles on the northern side and kilometres in the south.

Within the EU's customs union there are no internal tariffs on goods transported between member countries, and a common tariff on goods entering from outside. What's more, within its single market there are common standards on matters such as product design and food safety. For this reason there are no customs or regulatory checks at international borders within the EU.

Britain is keen that, after Brexit, it should have an independent trade policy, signing trade deals with other countries and setting its own tariffs. It also wants to take back control of the many rules that are set within the single market. If it does this, checks will have to be carried out on goods being traded between Britain and the EU, to collect tariffs and make sure that products meet standards on either side.

Yet both Britain and the EU have agreed that there must be no new checks at the Irish border. This is partly to maintain the free flow of goods and people, without which the island economy could be disrupted. But the deeper reason is political.

Whereas most members of Northern Ireland's Protestant majority want the province to remain part of the United Kingdom, most of its large Catholic minority want it to unite with the Republic of Ireland. This was the matter at the heart of three decades of sectarian violence known as the Troubles. The dismantling of the hard border in the 1990s helped to lay the ground for the Good Friday peace agreement of 1998, which enshrined Northern Irish people's right "to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both". The return of checkpoints or other border infrastructure would risk undermining that principle.

Britain has suggested that technology might be used to carry out customs and regulatory checks without the need for new physical infrastructure. The EU is unconvinced. So the two sides have come up with what they call a "backstop" agreement. Under this, the entire UK would remain in a customs union and in close regulatory alignment with the EU until some way is found to carry out customs and regulatory checks without building new infrastructure at the border. This would keep the border open. But it would prevent Britain from doing trade deals or setting many of its own market rules, until the promised technological solution was found.

Britain's government has signed up to this plan, as part of its Brexit deal with the EU. But for the deal to take effect, it must be signed off by Britain's Parliament—and more than 100 Conservative MPs consider the backstop unacceptable. They say, rightly, that the conditions for lifting the backstop might never be met, and that Britain would thus remain in permanent customs and regulatory alignment with the EU. They describe this as "vassalage", since Britain would have to obey rules it had no say in setting. The trouble is that they haven't come up with a viable alternative.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that Theresa May's Conservative government depends on an alliance with the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party. The DUP backed Brexit. But it particularly dislikes the backstop arrangement, as it would involve Northern Ireland being in closer regulatory alignment with the EU than the rest of the UK. As unionists, they are appalled by the idea of regulatory divergence between Northern Ireland and Britain. If Mrs May somehow manages to get Parliament to agree to her deal, the DUP has indicated that it would vote with the Labour opposition to bring down her government.

For the past 20 years Britain's political class has all but ignored Northern Ireland. Yet two decades after the end of the Troubles, the Irish question is back—and it is more likely than any other matter to derail Brexit.

Trump's Latest Scam: Defining Poverty out of Existence

Helaine Olen, Opinion writer, *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2019

The Trump administration wants to lower the poverty rate in the United States. But there's a catch: If the plan under discussion is enacted, it would cut the number of people living in poverty not by giving them a wage increase, but by defining them out of it. "Instead of actually doing anything to cut poverty in America, Trump is trying to fudge the numbers to artificially 'reduce' the U.S. poverty rate," said Rebecca Vallas, vice president of the Poverty to Prosperity Program at the Center for American Progress. "It's mathematical gaslighting."

Well, that's one way to make it look like "we have the strongest economy in the history of our nation," as Trump likes to proclaim.

On Monday, the Office of Management and Budget put out a request for comments on the possibility of adjusting how the government determines the official poverty measure, better known as the poverty threshold. That's the calculation used to determine eligibility for a range of government social safety net programs, including Medicaid, food stamps and housing assistance.

One proposed change would alter how the poverty threshold rises to reflect inflation; under the plan the threshold would move from using the consumer price index to using the "chained" consumer price index. While almost all indexes, including the CPI, measure inflation, in part, by assuming consumers will substitute one item for another when things get too costly, chained CPI does it more aggressively. Over time this change would lead to a decrease in the number of people living in poverty, not because they are earning more money, but because they will not meet the increasingly narrow definition of it. As a result, "fewer and fewer people would receive benefits over time," said Monique Morrissey, an economist with the Economic Policy Institute.

What makes this idea particularly absurd is that studies repeatedly find that lower-income households experience *greater* inflation than higher-earning ones. (Researcher Xavier Jaravel dubbed this "inflation inequality" in a 2017 paper.) One reason: Companies are catering to the top tier of earners, upping competition and reducing prices for many of the products the affluent are likely to use. For example, decreases in the price of organic groceries acted to reduce the overall increase in the price of food as calculated by the government. But fewer low-income households purchase organic food, since it costs more.

In fact, many experts agree that the poverty measure should be adjusted to make it *more* inclusive and generous. About a decade ago, the Department of Labor published research showing that, thanks to increases in housing and utility costs, government poverty measures significantly underestimate the number of households experiencing trouble making it financially on their earnings. This should be blindingly obvious to anyone checked in to the U.S. economy, where almost 40 percent of households can't come up with \$400 out of their own resources.

So what's the motivation? The OMB said in the request for comments that it's been decades since this measurement was reviewed. And, yes, researchers also listed other indexes they were studying and contemplating switching over to, including one that measures spending by elderly consumers.

But the Trump administration doesn't deserve the benefit of the doubt here for one minute. It was just last year that this White House declared the war on poverty "largely over and a success" as part of its efforts to argue for work requirements on people seeking government aid. The administration's 2020 budget proposal contains severe cuts to programs that help people in poverty, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid and housing programs. Proposed regulatory rollbacks such as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's plan to rescind key protections in payday lending rules are also leaving those who are struggling more vulnerable.

Finally, here's more than a small irony here. Once upon a time, Trump accused the Obama administration of using statistics to make the economy look better than it was, at one point calling the reported unemployment rate "one of the biggest hoaxes in American modern politics."

But in fact it's Trump who is resorting to myths about the economy. His proposed budgets rely on unrealistic growth estimates, and he has claimed that the gross domestic product is higher than the unemployment rate for "the first time in over 100 years," when in fact it's something that's happened dozens of times since 1948. Now his White House managed to figure out a way to combine two of his pet obsessions: declaring the economy under his watch the greatest ever, and making life harder for the poor. Talk about winning! Unfortunately, if this comes to pass, those living in poverty will lose.

Memo to Black Men: Stop Voting Republican

Renée Graham, *The Boston Globe* (MA), November 8, 2018

Brothers, we need to talk.

In the midterm elections, about 17 percent of black men voted to give Texas Republican Ted Cruz another term in the Senate. Around 11 percent supported Georgia gubernatorial candidate Brian Kemp, even though he did his best, as the Republican secretary of state, to disenfranchise more than a million voters, the majority of them African-American.

So, here's my request: Black men, vote like black women.

Yes, black men vote consistently for Democratic candidates, but there is no more unshakable bloc than black women. More than 90 percent voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016, and against failed Alabama Senate candidate and accused sexual predator Roy Moore last year.

In Tuesday's midterms, 94 percent of black women voters supported Beto O'Rourke, Cruz's opponent; in Georgia, 97 percent of African-American women backed Democrat Stacey Abrams. (Her opponent, Kemp, only resigned as secretary of state Thursday, after turning his contest against Abrams into a hot mess of voter suppression. She has refused to concede.)

Only in Florida's gubernatorial race did black men surpass black women in voting for the Democratic candidate — Andrew Gillum, the African-American mayor of Tallahassee.

Black women generally don't vote against their self-interests. We vote as if our lives depend on it, because they do.

Much has been made — and rightfully so — about white women supporting terrible white Republican men at the ballot box. Two years ago, 53 percent of white women shunned Hillary Clinton for Donald Trump, unswayed by the infamous "Access Hollywood" audiotape or his other boorish or racist behavior.

For the recent midterms, the numbers were again telling. Yes, Republicans lost support among suburban white women, which allowed Democrats to regain control of the House of Representatives. Yet in key races in Georgia, Texas, and Florida, white women still overwhelmingly voted red.

As exit polls revealed demographic breakdowns and voting patterns, they again garnered a lot of social media chatter about white women as "foot soldiers of the patriarchy." But the statistics that caught my eye concerned black men, and their double-digit support for Kemp and Cruz. Even in the Florida race between Gillum and Republican Ron DeSantis, 8 percent of black men voted for DeSantis. That's a low number, but still too high when one considers that DeSantis was endorsed by white supremacists and buoyed by racist robocalls.

How can so many black men still align with a party that, now more than ever, is unified by white identity politics?

During his campaign, O'Rourke spoke passionately in a black church about a young unarmed black man killed in his own apartment by a police officer in Texas. Cruz turned the O'Rourke speech into an attack ad.

One day before the election, Kemp tried to tie Abrams to the Black Panther Party, by tweeting a photo — plucked from Breitbart News — of armed members holding an Abrams sign. Kemp claimed this as proof that his opponent was "TOO EXTREME" for Georgia.

My brothers, don't believe the hype. This Republican Party is not the party of Lincoln. This is unabashedly the party of white supremacy, migrant family separations, racist fearmongering, and Brett Kavanaugh. Even one-time Trump-hugger Kanye West has finally stopped parading around in his red MAGA hat, at least for now.

Recently, *The Economist* pondered what it would take to make a black voter a likely Republican. For me, this was the most compelling statistic: The younger a black person is, the more likely to skew to the right. Although older white voters tend to be Republican, it's the reverse in black communities. That's because older African-Americans have vivid memories of Jim Crow and segregation.

Meanwhile, Trump is courting young black conservatives. In October, he welcomed hundreds to a leadership summit, where they chanted, "Build that wall." Yes, those were black people joining a racist president to keep brown people out of America.

Look, I get that black people aren't a monolith, and shouldn't be expected to hold the same beliefs and political leanings. But we're in an era when Republicans have swapped their dog whistles for bullhorns. With hate crimes rising, you'll still be targeted for the color of your skin, not the content of your politics.

You are supporting a man who places party (and, really, his own needs and wants) over country. He proudly calls himself "a nationalist," and has repeatedly declined to tone down rhetoric fueling racism and anti-Semitism.

Often, people of color ask white allies to speak to their own friends, relatives, and coworkers about the damage Republican candidates and policies do to our communities. In that spirit, black men, I am speaking to you. Our concerns are your concerns — or at least they should be.

Minnesota Man and Marine Vet Born in U.S. Files Legal Challenge to Passport Denial

Mark Esqueda wants a judge to declare once and for all that he was born in America.

By Brandon Stahl, *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), May 9, 2019

Raised in a small southern Minnesota town, Mark Esqueda grew to love his country.

- 5 “I just wanted to give something back to her,” he said.
He served about eight years in the military, obtaining high-level security clearance and fighting in combat zones. The gunfire deprived him of part of his hearing.
Yet, the United States government — or at least the State Department — doesn’t believe he’s a citizen. For the past six years Esqueda, 30, has been trying to get a passport to visit family overseas, but he has been repeatedly denied.
- 10 “If they just used a little common sense this would not be happening,” he said.
A State Department official declined to comment, citing pending litigation.
Esqueda, backed by the Minnesota ACLU, filed a federal lawsuit Thursday against Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, asking a judge to declare that he was born in this country.
“Mark was born here and bravely served our country in the military,” attorney Jenny Gassman-Pines said in a
- 15 statement. “What the government has demanded from Mark goes well beyond its own requirements to prove his citizenship. We look forward to holding the government accountable and getting Mark the recognition he deserves as a citizen and patriot.”
Lynette Kalsnes, communications director for the ACLU of Minnesota, said that while hard numbers aren’t available, the ACLU is hearing from an increasing number of attorneys regarding circumstances like Esqueda’s,
- 20 especially along the southern border.
The Washington Post reported last year that the Trump administration is pursuing a crackdown aimed at Hispanics with fraudulent birth certificates along the border. The State Department challenged the allegation, saying its policy has not changed from previous administrations. But a Houston attorney told the Post that the number of passport denials and revocations for people born along the border had been “skyrocketing.”
- 25 The evidence Esqueda collected over the years to show the judge includes a certified copy of a birth certificate showing that he was born in Hidalgo, Texas. That certificate was signed by a police officer who witnessed the birth. Kalsnes said police officers often served as witnesses to prevent such citizenship issues from occurring.
The problem is the midwife who attended the birth and who also signed the certificate, Robert Nunez, “is not reliable,” according to a letter the State Department sent to Esqueda.
- 30 “There is reason to believe that the birth attendant who filed your birth certificate did so fraudulently,” Timothy Wiesnet, a State Department director, wrote to Esqueda in January 2017.
Esqueda knew none of that after his family moved from Texas to Minnesota to work on farms and raised him in the Marshall and Lake Heron area, about an hour southwest of Mankato. He read “Flags of Our Fathers” and was inspired to join the Marines in 2007. He was deployed to Iraq, where he served for seven months, then later to
- 35 Afghanistan, where he served another seven months.
The Navy granted him its second-highest form of security clearance, according to the lawsuit he filed Thursday. To get that clearance, he passed a military background check.
He was honorably discharged from the Marines in 2011 and returned to Minnesota with a partial disability for his hearing loss.
- 40 “The guy who gave me the test said I had the ears of a 60-year-old man,” he said.
He signed up with the National Guard and, in 2012, applied for a passport, hoping to travel to see his family. That’s when the State Department first denied him, and when Esqueda learned about the doubt about his birth in the country.
“It just didn’t make sense to me,” he said.
- 45 The State Department asked for more documentation of his citizenship. After several years, he was able to gather the signed birth report from the police officer, documents outlining the security clearance he was granted and records showing that his family received government health and food benefits.
He wanted to visit family in Germany in 2015 as his sister was expecting her first child. He again applied for a passport, supplying the new documents, but was again denied. The State Department wanted more information.
- 50 Esqueda complied, gathering affidavits from family and friends swearing that he was born in America. In January 2017, the State Department again denied him.
“You have not submitted sufficient early records to support your birth in the United States,” it wrote to him.
According to the ACLU, the government’s standard for proof in these passport cases is a preponderance of the evidence, which means something is more likely than not.
- 55 By demanding even more proof, they said, the government is “violating its own standards and rules.”
In a prepared statement issued late Thursday, the State Department said policies on how to handle passport applications haven’t changed since 2009, and that denial rates are at their lowest in six years.
Esqueda, who now works as a millwright on grain elevators, said he filed the lawsuit Thursday as a last resort. He missed the opportunity to see his niece born in Germany, but he wants to see her now.
- 60 “I want to make up for missing that and make that trip,” he said.

Labour must pursue a better Brexit deal, not a second referendum

Owen Jones, *The Guardian*, 16 Jan 2019

It is, perversely, a sign of the government's weakness, not its strength, that it has inevitably seen off a vote of no confidence. All that unites a bitterly fractious Conservative party is panic at the prospect of a Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour government coming to power in a general election. Today, the polling average has Labour slightly ahead. Conservatives fear that a Corbyn-led administration would not be like a "normal" Labour government, and would upend an economic consensus established by Margaret Thatcher. And they would be right.

The media will now attempt to shift the narrative, claiming that it is Labour under pressure. This is absurd. The government has just suffered the biggest parliamentary defeat in the history of British democracy. A disastrous near-decade of Tory rule has left Britain in its worst combined political and social crisis in modern times, the consequence of ideologically driven austerity and catastrophic political decisions by both David Cameron and May. Labour will be pilloried for not having a magical solution – when there is none – to a crisis engineered by its opponents.

There will be claims that, having lost this no-confidence attempt, Labour's democratically agreed official policy dictates that it must now support a second referendum. But this is inaccurate. The policy states that the "best outcome for the country is an immediate general election that can sweep the Tories from power", but if such an election cannot be engineered, the party "must support all options remaining on the table, including campaigning for a public vote".

What is Labour's strategy? Let's take a second referendum. Whatever the leadership decides, it is not even clear that a majority can be found for it. One Labour MP tells me that, in a free vote, "the parliamentary Labour party would be split down the middle, possibly [with] even more against". Around 100 Labour MPs were predicted to declare in favour of a second referendum today; in the end, just 71 did so. If half of the parliamentary party voted for a second referendum, that would amount to less than a fifth of parliament; well over 100 Tory MPs would have to support it too. It is really difficult to see this happening, meaning that Labour would risk alienating its leave voters for nothing.

If Labour imposed support of a referendum, shadow cabinet members representing leave constituencies would resign. If a referendum becomes the only option left, then Labour will have to campaign for remain, and make a great fist of it. But don't have any illusions. The campaign will be even more bitter and vicious than the last; the culture war that has enveloped the country will get worse; millions of leave voters will be angered and even more disillusioned than before; and under a slogan of "tell them again", leave may well win once more. Tory rule is the source of the nation's ills: wishing to remove this Conservative government – and the only means of doing so is a Labour victory – is not putting "party before country", it's an attempt to save the nation from the most calamitous administration since the war. Of Labour's 54 Tory-held target seats, 41 voted leave. Just 13 opted for remain. Without holding on to its existing leavers and winning over more, Labour cannot win an election, and the injustices that helped lead to the Brexit vote will be exacerbated.

So what does the party do? It must make a pitch to unite the country. The Tories have sought to represent only the leave side – and even then, not the bread-and-butter concerns of leave voters – and their key media supporters have demonised remainers. Labour must emphasise that the real conflict is not between supporters or opponents of Brexit, but the vast majority against the elite. It must refocus the debate on what unites both tribes, such as living standards, jobs, the NHS, taxing the rich and public ownership. That means advocating a compromise. A majority does exist in parliament for a customs union. And although many within the Labour leadership regard it as unsatisfactory, so-called Norway plus, combining the single market and a customs union, has a good chance of winning support across the parliamentary divide. The EU has made it clear that a shift in Britain's red lines will open up new opportunities. That will refocus the debate on bitter Tory divisions, too.

Labour will be shouted down by a vocal lobby if it fails to back a second referendum. But, for now, the party must surely direct its efforts at constructing a new deal.

Brexit and parliament: now dissolve the red lines

Editorial, *The Guardian*, Wed 16 Jan 2019

A Commons vote affirming confidence in Her Majesty's government does not indicate that parliament trusts Theresa May. Her reprieve on Wednesday night, by a margin of 19, largely expresses Tory and DUP reluctance to risk a general election. Power is still flowing away from the prime minister.

In 2017 voters deprived the Tories of a majority. Last December the government was found in contempt of parliament. One-third of Tory MPs have said they have no confidence in Mrs May as their party's leader. On Tuesday, the prime minister's Brexit deal was crushed in a Commons defeat greater than any recorded in the modern era. Mrs May's authority has been stripped away; her credibility is gone. Every precedent guides her towards resignation. But not much about Brexit follows precedent.

Immediately after Wednesday's vote the prime minister offered talks with leaders of opposition parties to break the impasse. It is a welcome shift in tone, but there is no indication from Mrs May's record that she has the diplomatic skills required to make such a consultation fruitful. She has clung compulsively to her original negotiating "red lines" and still seems unaware that the Brexit model they defined is beyond resuscitation. Her resistance to compromise has ratcheted up the risk of Britain reaching the article 50 deadline without any deal.

Despite Mrs May's new overtures, Downing Street still formally rejects the prospect of a customs union with the EU, although softening that line would transform dialogue with Labour and pro-European Tories. A customs union alone does not dissolve obstacles in the Commons, nor does it resolve problems around the Irish border, but it is the foundation of any Brexit deal that stands a chance of achieving those goals. Mrs May's objection is that it limits independence in trade talks and upsets hardline Tory Eurosceptics. But the UK's leverage in talks with superpower blocs – the US, China, India, the EU – is vastly overstated and the Brexit hardliners will never be satisfied with any deal. Holding out for their approval is a waste of time.

Mrs May speaks often about duty to the electorate, as if the choices she makes stand above party interest. The opposite is true: she has imprisoned herself in a narrow, parochial view of what Brexit means, conditioned by irrational attachment to the Tory right. It is imperative that she break free of those constraints. She must show sincerity in the offer to work across the house, which means giving serious consideration to proposals that cross the red lines: a customs union, Efta, the EEA or some combination of those institutional arrangements.

There are models of a soft Brexit that have been developed by groups of Labour and Tory MPs, showing the bipartisan spirit that Mrs May lacks. Wednesday's fierce no-confidence debate stoked fires of tribal party allegiance, but those flames cannot be allowed to consume the prospect of Brexit partnership. The government's next step must be to engage with the authors of alternative Brexit blueprints and present them in parliament as a menu of options, subject to indicative, unwhipped votes. MPs must, in the first analysis, be allowed to coalesce around plans unconstrained by formal party lines. The Commons should consider how such ideas might be developed with wider popular consent, as envisaged in the innovative model of a citizens' assembly. The public could then be given a final say on the choices available, including EU membership on current terms.

That process demands an extension to the article 50 period. Even an off-the-shelf Brexit model needs enabling legislation, which takes time. The prime minister's reluctance to admit as much is another symptom of her delusional obstinacy. Mrs May has routinely struggled to adapt to changing circumstance as events have progressively limited her room for manoeuvre. That rigidity seems intrinsic to her character, irrespective of invitations to cross-party talks. It is not enough to affect a change of tone in the aftermath of a fierce parliamentary debate. The shift in style is welcome and long overdue. But the prime minister must now urgently show readiness to compromise on the very substance of Brexit.

Brexit, mother of all messes

The Economist, Jan 17th 2019

No plan by any modern British government has been so soundly thrashed as the Brexit deal thrown out by Parliament on January 15th. The withdrawal agreement, the centrepiece of Theresa May's premiership, which she has spent nearly two years hammering out with the European Union, was rejected after five days' debate by 432 votes to 202. Her own Conservative bankbenchers voted against her by three to one.

Three years ago, in the biggest poll in the country's history, Britons voted in a referendum to leave the EU. Yet Parliament, freshly elected a year later by those same voters, has judged the terms of exit unacceptable. The EU shows little willingness to renegotiate. If this puzzle cannot be solved by March 29th, Britain will fall out with no deal at all.

To avoid that catastrophe, the priority must be to ask the EU for more time. But even with the clock on their side, MPs seem unlikely to agree on a solution to Brexit's great riddle: what exit terms, if any, truly satisfy the will of the people? With every week in which MPs fail to answer this question, it becomes clearer that the people themselves must decide, in a second referendum.

The rout this week was the result of two years of political misjudgment. The referendum of 2016 was won by just 52% to 48%. Yet rather than consult the defeated side, Mrs May pursued a hardline Brexit, hurriedly drawn up with a handful of advisers and calibrated to please her Conservative Party. After she lost her majority in 2017 the need to build a consensus became clearer still, but she doubled down. Even after Parliament established its right to vote on the final deal, she didn't budge, instead trying (and failing) to frustrate Parliament's vote by running down the clock. The doggedness that has won her many admirers now looks like pig-headedness. The prime minister's promise after this week's crushing defeat to work with opposition MPs comes two years too late.

But the crisis is not just about poor leadership. Brexit has exposed two deeper problems. One concerns the difficulties that will face any country that tries to "take back control", as the Leave campaign put it, in a globalised, interconnected world. If you take back the right to set your own rules and standards, it will by definition become harder to do business with countries that use different ones. If you want to trade, you will probably end up following the rules of a more powerful partner—which for Britain means the EU or America—only without a say in setting them. Brexit thus amounts to taking back control in a literal sense, but losing control in a meaningful one. Leavers are right that the EU is an increasingly unappealing place, with its Italian populists, French gilets jaunes, stuttering German economy and claret-swilling uber-bureaucrats in Brussels. But they could not be more wrong in their judgment that the EU's ominous direction of travel makes it wise for Britain to abandon its seat there.

The second essential problem Brexit has exposed concerns democracy. Britain has a long history of representative democracy, in which MPs are elected by voters to take decisions on their behalf. The referendum of 2016 was a rarer dash of direct democracy, when the public decided on a matter of policy. Today's crisis has been caused by the two butting up against each other. The referendum gave a clear and legitimate command to leave the EU. To ignore it would be to subvert the will of the people. Yet the people's representatives in Parliament have made an equally clear and legitimate judgment that Mrs May's Brexit deal is not in their constituents' interests. To sideline MPs, as Mrs May has all along tried to do, would be no less a perversion of democracy.

Mrs May's deal is not as bad as some of her critics make out, but it is far from what was promised in 2016. Ejection from the single market, the decline of industries ranging from finance to carmaking, the destabilisation of Northern Ireland and an exit bill of some \$50bn: none of this was advertised in the campaign.

But with more time, perhaps a deal might be found that both Parliament and the EU can agree on. Either a permanent customs union or a Norwegian-style model might squeak through. But both would demand compromises, such as Britain relinquishing the right to sign its own trade deals or maintaining free movement, that contradict some Leave campaign promises. But the will of the people is too important to be merely guessed at by squabbling MPs. Parliament's inability to define and agree on what the rest of the country really wants makes it clearer than ever that the only practical and principled way out of the mess is to go back to the people, and ask.

State Universities Are Being Resegregated

Nearly half of all elite public universities are enrolling a lower percentage of black students than they were in the mid-1990s.

Mark Huelsman, *The Nation*, January 30, 2019

5 Earlier this month, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill became the latest front in the war on affirmative action when Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) filed a brief in federal court attacking UNC's use of race in its admissions process. SFFA, organized by conservative activist Edward Blum, had already filed a similar lawsuit against Harvard. Avid court watchers will recognize Blum for his zealous crusade against the University of Texas—his own alma mater—on behalf of prospective student Abigail Fisher. In
10 that case, *Fisher v. Texas*, the court ruled that a diverse student body is a worthy priority, and that race can still be considered as one factor among many in admissions decisions.

The new case against UNC—Chapel Hill, though, demonstrates the tirelessness of the conservative effort to remove race from any admissions equation. Despite the Supreme Court's decisions to keep a limited version of affirmative action alive, conservatives have succeeded in scaring many colleges into colorblindness.
15 According to one study by researchers at the University of Toronto and Brown University, the percent of selective colleges that reported considering race in admissions dropped from 60 percent in 1994 to 35 percent in 2014. (...)

And certainly, this is not just a case of being gun-shy about affirmative action. As state funding has stagnated or declined on a per-student basis, colleges are under immense pressure to extract more revenue
20 from other sources, including students themselves. The result can be greater recruitment of out-of-state or international students or wealthy in-state students who do not require need-based financial aid. This reduces the number of spots for poor or middle-class students of color.

The result is that less selective—and, critically, less well-resourced—colleges—from regional public institutions and community colleges, to historically black colleges and universities—have taken up the
25 mantle, despite the fact that these schools routinely receive half as much support per-student from state and local appropriations. With less help from states, and virtually no help from the Trump administration, these schools are cobbling together what they can for students who have done exactly what they were told to do: graduate from high school, go to college, and better yourself.

This is all happening amid a rash of high-profile incidences of racism, social exclusion, and over-policing on
30 elite college campuses in the past few years. In the past year alone, students of color have been targeted, or had the authorities called on them for napping in a dorm's common room, eating lunch in a quiet spot on campus, going to their job of 14 years after working out at the campus gym, or simply going on a campus tour. The University of Virginia's reputation was forever stained when white nationalists used Charlottesville as a hateful, and deadly, demonstration venue. It stands to reason that the empowerment of
35 white supremacy, and the continual aggression—micro or otherwise—toward black students are more likely when those students are a smaller, and less normal, part of the typical campus experience.

It can also create a cycle that is exceedingly hard to break. With fewer peers and greater safety concerns, black students can reasonably assess that these campuses are not designed for them. After the University of Missouri was home to protests around bigotry and hate in 2015, the school saw a dip in enrollment that was
40 particularly pronounced among black students. As one Missouri student, Whitney Matewe, explained to *The New York Times*, "Being 'the other' in every classroom and every situation is exhausting." When campuses like UNC house Confederate statues, it also sends a clear and intimidating signal to any nonwhite student wanting to enroll.

In addition to threatening the social fabric of our campuses, it makes it harder to put public resources into
45 the schools that desperately need them. Each state's public flagship campus carries tremendous political and economic clout; they often produce titans of business, elected officials. Many of these schools have also seen deep cuts, but in some cases can rely partially on the largesse of wealthy alumni, which only further threatens to exacerbate a deep racial wealth gap that persists—and even grows—at every education level. The median college-educated white household has over \$200,000 in wealth, compared to under \$50,000 for
50 the median black college-educated household. The wealth gap has too many historical causes to name, but eliminating the ability of black students to enroll in the same selective schools will not help.

This is why the effort to dismantle affirmative action is so dangerous. It is one of the few tools that we have to expand opportunity in an era of resource scarcity, when predatory colleges are being given new life by the Trump administration and higher education is a fraught endeavor for many students of color. We should be
55 doing all we can to beat back right-wing efforts to make college campuses less diverse. Because up to this point, we've been doing a good enough job of it on our own.

Mark Huelsman is the associate director of policy and research at Demos.

OPINION: MAGA hats and blackface are different forms of expression, but they share a certain unfortunate DNA By Robin Abcarian, *Los Angeles Times* (CA), February 5, 2019

- Feb. 05--Two potent racial symbols -- MAGA hats and blackface -- have been in the news. They may not appear related at first blush, but they belong on a political continuum that ranges from racial provocation to outright racism.
- 5 They share DNA.
Wearing a "Make America Great Again" hat is not necessarily an overt expression of racism.
But if you wear one, it's a pretty good indication that you share, admire or appreciate President Trump's racist views about Mexicans, Muslims and border walls.
That hat stirs strong emotions. It is meant to.
- 10 I know a Democratic mom in Orange County who asked her teenage son's friend to take his MAGA hat off in her house. On his way out, the kid yanked up her Katie Porter-for-Congress lawn sign, which ended the boys' friendship.
Last week, a biracial restaurant owner in San Mateo tweeted that he regarded the hats as no different than "a swastika, white hood, or any other symbol of intolerance and hate."
"It hasn't happened yet," wrote J. Kenji López-Alt, "but if you come into my restaurant wearing a MAGA cap, you
- 15 aren't getting served."
He quickly -- and rightly -- apologized after he was slammed for intolerance. You can reserve the right to refuse service to anyone, but if you choose your patrons based on their politics, you deserve to go under.
(If I owned a restaurant, I wouldn't toss you out if you wore a MAGA hat to dinner, although I do think hats at the table are extremely rude.)
- 20 When Nick Sandmann, a Kentucky high school student, wore a MAGA hat as he engaged in what appeared to be a staring contest with Nathan Phillips, a Native American man, the image came across as disrespectful at best, and racist at worst. The resulting analysis of the event has taken on a Rorschach-like quality: You see what you want to see. But without that hat, the story would not have blown up.
MAGA hats simply don't mean anything outside their implicit political message: The past was better because the
- 25 country was whiter.
I look forward to the day they are consigned to the same historical fate as Confederate flags.
Even then, they will surely still have their fans.
Whether white people who blacken their faces for fun know it or not, the practice is rooted in minstrelsy and the mockery of blacks by whites. Like the MAGA hat, it is an expression of white supremacy.
- 30 The photo that surfaced last week from Democratic Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam's yearbook page in medical school was bad enough: a white man in blackface standing next to a (presumably) white man in a Ku Klux Klan white robe and pointed hood.
The only thing he had going for himself was that he did not try to defend the photo.
"That photo and the racist and offensive attitudes it represents does not reflect that person I am today, or the way I
- 35 have conducted myself as a soldier, a doctor and a public servant," Northam said in a video message to his constituents on Friday. "I am deeply sorry."
It really doesn't matter that he later decided he couldn't possibly have been one of the two figures in the photo. The damage was done.
At his Saturday news conference, he admitted having once blackened his face for a Michael Jackson dance contest,
- 40 saying, "You cannot get shoe polish off." He seemed poised to moonwalk, until his wife stopped him. The entire performance was an exercise in historical, political and personal cluelessness.
"Since he loves Michael," said the Rev. Al Sharpton on MSNBC, "he should go back to the mansion and play 'Beat It' and start packing."
Seems like his fellow Virginians agree.
- 45 The lesson -- that blackface is never funny, never acceptable -- is one that white Americans seem destined to have to learn over and over again.
Twenty-five years ago, "Cheers" actor Ted Danson donned blackface and performed a profane comedy routine (he used the N-word more than a dozen times) at the New York Friars Club roast of his then-girlfriend, Whoopi Goldberg.
His face paint included oversized white lips. The negative reaction was swift. (...)
- 50 Twenty years later, the white actress Julianne Hough was blasted for darkening her face when she dressed up as Uzo Aduba's character "Crazy Eyes" from "Orange is the New Black."
She was immediately called out and apologized.
"It certainly was never my intention to be disrespectful or demeaning to anyone in any way," Hough said. "I realize my costume hurt and offended people and I truly apologize."
- 55 Aduba's response was kind: "I think maybe it was an unfortunate event, but she apologized and I feel like we can all move on."
I wish we could move on.
Last fall, TV host Megyn Kelly lost her job after insisting it used to be OK to wear blackface on Halloween.
"Back when I was a kid, that was OK just as long as you were dressing as a character," Kelly said. "I can't keep up
- 60 with the number of people we're offending by being normal people."
You have to live deep inside a cosseted world of white privilege to think of blackface as "normal."

Many people still reject Charles Darwin's theory of evolution

The Economist, Feb 12th 2019

Today is Darwin Day, a date when people are invited to celebrate the achievements of a British biologist who provided modern science with one of its guiding axioms: the principle that all species of life evolved through a process of natural selection over many millions of years. In the view of the overwhelming majority of scientists, the ideas of Charles Darwin (1809-1882) have been established and indeed reaffirmed by all subsequent investigations into the nature of life. And, at least in all liberal democracies, children are generally taught by their science teachers to understand the emergence of life through a Darwinian lens.

Still, there have always been substantial minorities who, whether on religious or other grounds, refuse to accept the Englishman's ideas. Take the United States, long seen as a stronghold of ideas that challenge Darwin head-on (by insisting that the Biblical account of a six-day creation is literally true) or in a more indirect way by insisting that the process of evolution must have been guided by some higher, intelligent power. Some court decisions have effectively barred the teaching of theories other than evolution in public schools. But clearly many Americans grow up with very different ideas, imbibed through faith-based educational establishments, home-schooling or Sunday school.

How many, though? Pew, a pollster and research body based in Washington, DC, has just published an essay showing that the number of hard-core creationists (defined as those who assert that human beings have always existed in their present form) appears to vary depending on how the questioner broaches the subject. In one approach, American respondents were given a choice between the proposition that life forms had evolved over aeons of time and the statement that humans, at least, had always been the way they are now. Some 31% opted for the latter statement. But a different picture emerges if people are given a three-way choice: between the idea that life evolved with natural selection alone; the idea that evolution did happen but was guided by a high power; and the insistence that humans have never changed. To that challenge, only 18% adopt the hard-core creationist line, while 48% believe in divinely directed evolution and 33% in natural selection alone.

Even among evangelical Protestants, assumed to be the most theologically conservative segment of society, the line of questioning matters a lot. Some 62% are prepared to accept that humans evolved over time, if at the outset they are given the chance to say that God had a hand in the process. But if that choice is not given, only 32% can accept the idea of gradual evolution.

In Darwin's British homeland, which is generally a more secular place, sentiment is confused and confusing. Puffin Books, a children's publisher, chose Darwin Day to issue a kid-friendly edition of the scientist's seminal work, the *Origin of Species*, and commissioned a poll to find how today's Britons feel about evolution. Only half the respondents felt certain that the theory of evolution was true, while another 19% reckoned it was probably right. Hard-core creationist belief (defined as thinking creation happened all at once) was professed by 12%.

The teaching of religious creation narratives is controversial in Britain, in part because secularists fear that the government's openness to new school structures (such as academies or free schools) will open the way for obscurantist agendas. The government has insisted that any school receiving state funding must teach the Darwinian theory of evolution in science lessons. Any mention of theological narratives must be confined to religious-education classes. But campaign groups such as Humanist UK have complained that the government has been slow to impose this policy. Many private religious schools still teach creationism as scientifically valid.

Whatever is making young people cautious about accepting Darwin, the main factor cannot be messages they are receiving in places of worship (which very few attend) or the influence of fundamentalist schools, which form only a tiny segment of British education. In the Catholic and Anglican schools which account for a much bigger sector, Darwin's ideas have been fully accepted for many decades: any teacher who deviates from that line will attract controversy, but the number of such cases is quite low.

One worrying finding of the British poll is that nearly 30% of people had no idea that Darwin had come up with the theory of evolution and 9% credited him with dreaming up the theory of relativity. Levels of ignorance were higher among young adults than seniors. Perhaps homo britannicus is evolving in the wrong direction.

The Guardian view on Theresa May's speech: getting by on borrowed time

Editorial, *The Guardian*, Wed 3 Oct 2018

If a leader's fate could be decided by a single speech, Theresa May's tenure at the top of the Conservative party might not have survived the calamitous delivery of last year's keynote conference address. Instead the prime minister made it through another year and, in a vastly improved display, was able even to joke about the mishaps that ruined her attempted relaunch in 2017. But just as one bad day did not destroy Mrs May, a relatively good one does not save her. The structural obstacles to success, in Brexit and other policy areas, are unchanged by her performance in Birmingham.

Mrs May has at least bought herself time. It might be only a few weeks, but she can proceed with Brexit negotiations more confident that her party is willing her to succeed instead of plotting her demise. Yet that advantage is of little value if she doesn't also have permission to make compromises in Brussels. It looks increasingly certain that any deal will involve UK participation in something very like a customs union for a very long time (but branded as something temporary). That will inflame Tory hardliners and increase the likelihood of Mrs May relying on Labour votes in parliament. That foreseeable necessity partly explains the prime minister's lavish praise for opposition backbenchers, casting them as noble guardians of a moderate left tradition, tragically traduced by an extremist leader.

Mrs May's fear of defeat for her deal in the Commons was obvious also in a passage attacking the "People's Vote" campaign for another referendum. She warned that factional in-fighting among leavers could lead to Brexit being abandoned, which is, of course, what a significant number of voters are hoping for. Mrs May is entitled to reject their prescription, but she is wrong to denigrate and invalidate their views as an affront to democracy. She was eloquent in urging national unity and denouncing divisive politics, yet her definition of "the people" is stubbornly, unthinkingly restricted to those who embrace Brexit with enthusiasm. A substantial minority do not. That doesn't mean Mrs May has no plan to win back lost support. Her declaration of an end to austerity is significant, not because it will ease the financial pain from cuts still coming or compensate those who have already suffered, but because it acknowledged that the political centre ground has moved leftwards.

The prime minister is right to recognise that public services need investment. She is also right that councils must build homes. Lifting the cap on local authority borrowing for that purpose is an overdue but nonetheless welcome capitulation to the reality of soaring demand for social housing. Whether the Treasury is equally persuaded is a different matter, and Mrs May's capacity to deliver on promises of social renewal has not, in the past, been equal to her rhetoric. That applies too to her revived commitment to help people who feel "left behind". The noble words are familiar by now; the record in government invites no confidence in successful enactment.

In that respect, the prime minister's insistence on separating Brexit from other policy areas is at the root of her problems. She sees the EU negotiation as a discrete task, a necessary chore that distracts from the business of fixing "burning injustices", bringing people together and generally achieving the fine things advertised in her speeches. She fails to see that Brexit – and her manner of handling it in particular, rejecting the single market before negotiations had even begun – has been an engine of national disunity and a costly folly that can only feed the flames.

If the prime minister had understood the merits of a much softer Brexit and was able to make the case for it with reference to the narrow margin of the referendum result, she might now be better placed to speak about bringing people together, healing and nurturing future prosperity. Instead she lurched towards an economically illiterate hard Brexit and squandered goodwill that might have been available to her from millions of anxious people, regardless of how they voted in the referendum. One shrewdly crafted, competently delivered speech cannot unmake that original mistake.

At 70, Prince Charles has waited long enough. The Queen should step aside

Christina Patterson, *The Guardian*, Wed 14 Nov 2018

He has at least four magnificent homes. He has 134,000 acres. He's a duke. He's an earl. He's a lord. He has a lovely wife, who cheers him up. He has two handsome sons, each of whom has a beautiful wife. He has three grandchildren who adore him. He has an awful lot, this mild-mannered Englishman who turns 70 on Wednesday. Oh, and he has a rich mum. He has a really, really rich mum. I wonder what she'll give him for his birthday?

Since 1976, Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, Prince of Wales, Earl of Chester, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland, has been helping young people into work. The charity he founded, the Prince's Trust, has helped more than 900,000 young people into education or employment. But his own apprenticeship has gone on for a very, very, very long time.

Charles was four when he watched a man put a gold object on his mother's head, in a ceremony watched by more than 270 million people. Almost everything that has followed in his life has been shaped by that object, studded with 40 rubies, 40 sapphires and 63 pearls, an object so heavy, as his mother said in a TV programme earlier this year, that it could "break your neck". It was the reason he married a young girl he didn't love. It was the reason he didn't marry the girl he did love, or not until he was 56 and she was 57 and so, so much water had passed under the bridge.

He didn't ask for a crown. His mother didn't ask for a crown. His grandfather certainly didn't ask for a crown. None of them asked for it, but if you're born in a country that has the relics of a feudal system, to someone who has been unfortunate enough to have been born, or married, into the family that has to pretend they run it, you don't get to choose. You can give it up, as Charles's great uncle did to marry the woman he loved, but it doesn't usually go down all that well.

From the moment the prince learned that not everyone's mum is called "your majesty", he has known that he will one day have to wear that crown. What he didn't know was that he would be waiting through his 40s, 50s and 60s. He didn't know that he would be collecting his bus pass, and his pension (which he gives to an old people's charity); that he would, in fact, spend 70 years waiting for something he didn't particularly want and may not even get. He has spent his entire life being judged in the light of that thing he hasn't yet got. Surely it's now time to put that wait to an end.

When the Queen promised, on her 21st birthday, to devote her "whole life, whether it be long or short" to the service of her country and her Commonwealth, she meant what she said. Day after boring day, for hours every day, she has shaken hands with people she will never see again. She has smiled and asked them if they have travelled far, and known that her boring day is a highlight of their lives. She has had to be polite to David Cameron. She has had to be polite to Donald Trump. She spends her mornings answering letters. Last year she carried out 292 royal engagements. And she has done all this with dignity and grace.

Last Sunday, at the armistice centenary, she looked tired. For the second time, she didn't lay a wreath. Aged 92, she is still going relatively strong, but she can't go on as strong as this for ever. She will get more tired and she will get more frail. We might see her shuffle. We might see her stoop. We might even see her memory fail. There are no signs of this yet, but more than a third of women over 90, according to some studies, show symptoms of dementia. For 66 years, the Queen has done a magnificent job in a terrible job. It's hard to imagine a single human being in the world who could have done it better. It would be a terrible shame to see her do it badly now.

Charles Philip Arthur George may not do such a good job. But he does work hard. Last year, he undertook 546 royal engagements. He is patron of more than 350 charities. He supports the arts. He was an environmentalist long before it became fashionable. He is thoughtful. He is dutiful. And he is, according to many people who know him well, kind.

That's fine. That's plenty. That's more than enough. We have a man waiting to do the job he has been trained for all his life. Your Majesty, we love you, but it's time to move on.

Northern Ireland's young people know their history. If only the rest of Britain did too

John Harris, *The Guardian*, Tue 12 Feb 2019

Not long ago, I saw a video online of the former Brexit secretary Dominic Raab being questioned by a Northern Irish MP, and awkwardly admitting that he had never made time to read the Good Friday agreement. But every household in the North has a copy of it. You could read it in a day. Someone supposedly negotiating on Northern Ireland's behalf couldn't even be bothered. It's kind of Irish history repeating itself. A decision's made in England, and the Northern Irish just dragged along with it.

This was a sentiment I heard time and again in Ireland. I travelled along the often labyrinthine border between Northern Ireland and the Republic, stopping to talk to people for whom that largely invisible line had been a complete irrelevance until the great convulsion of June 2016 put it back on the political agenda. Just about everyone I met knew perfectly well that Theresa May's travails over the so-called backstop are the product of politicians and voters elsewhere forgetting about the island of Ireland, only to be reminded that for the people who live there, Brexit represents a profound set of dangers. No one was that surprised about this amnesia, but many were very angry about it.

The boredom with Brexit that I have endlessly encountered in England was nowhere to be seen. Eighty-eight miles from Derry in the old port city of Newry, people talked about a place that had lived in the shadow of the old border for more than 60 years and suffered dire economic consequences, only to undergo an amazing recovery that suddenly feels fragile. Here and elsewhere, there was exasperation at the historical accident that had made Theresa May dependent on the Democratic Unionist party, whose original opposition to the Good Friday agreement still rankles and whose hostility to the backstop is a central part of Northern Ireland's current pain. On the other side of the sectarian divide, in even the sleepest places, I spotted newly printed posters and hoardings demanding a united Ireland, their strident tone betraying the fact that setting out on that road would inevitably trigger no end of strife.

Across the sea, Brexit has triggered a certain obstinacy and aggressive nostalgia among older people, and here, you can pick up something comparable. In the tiny southern Irish border town of Clones, a sixtysomething drinker in a local bar said that Britain could have Brexit if it "gives us back the six counties", while a younger man shook his head at the discomfiting echo of conflicts he obviously wanted to forget. In Enniskillen, a local member of the DUP who had served in the British army told me that if there was any serious attempt to unite Ireland's two halves, "I would stand back, and get my uniform back on, and stand firm with the British."

Everywhere I went, people whose views were less entrenched asked the same set of questions. If the UK leaves Europe with no deal, and Northern Ireland and the Republic are suddenly separated by tariffs and new regulations, would that mean the return of what official-speak calls "border infrastructure"? If it did, wouldn't that give people something to shoot at, or blow up? Whatever the prime minister's current contortions, what if Brexit – even with a deal – and the Ireland envisaged by the Good Friday agreement turn out to be mutually exclusive?

Such points were usually balanced by a set of convictions people seemed to be clinging to: that no one wants the border back, and any kind of reversal of the peace process is unthinkable. But then the unease would return as it was acknowledged that Brexit is a veritable Pandora's box, brimming with unforeseen consequences.

What lots of people understood as a matter of instinct was obvious: that in the context of the peace process, the UK's exit from the EU is a colossal breach of trust, made infinitely worse by the fact that it has been perpetrated so casually. The guilty parties stretch from mindless Tory Brexiteers, through the Labour politicians who have accepted our exit as a given, to the kind of voters who seem to have instant recall of the distant glories of the second world war but huge blind spots when it comes to a conflict that was still rocking the UK only a quarter of a century ago.

As a recent car bomb in Derry proves, the challenges of peace and stability are by no means over.

Ted Cruz Says Democrats' 'Nutty' Green New Deal Would Ban Cows, Pay 'Bums' who Refuse to Work

Todd J. Gillman, *The Dallas Morning News* (TX), February 13, 2019

- WASHINGTON -- Sen. Ted Cruz called the "Green New Deal" a sign of "just how nutty Democrats are getting," telling donors in a conference call Tuesday night that it's a "kooky" approach that would entail bans on cars, planes, trains and cattle.
- "I would say it was half-assed but that probably gives it more credit than it deserves," he said. "It's the sort of thing that you would expect crazy lefty college kids to come up with who never actually lived in the real world...but were trying to think of -- I want to live in a world with unicorns and daisies floating in the sky."
- Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Tuesday afternoon that he will put the plan to a vote, a move aimed at putting Senate Democrats on the spot--especially the growing ranks of those running for president, nearly all of whom have co-sponsored it.
- "It'll be interesting to see just how many Democrats will be willing to jump on the crazy train. Of course, they won't be able to run it because they can't actually start a train under the Green New Deal," Cruz said.
- The plan actually calls for expansion of public transit and high speed rail, to reduce dependence on cars and planes.
- Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a freshman Democrat from New York City and an avowed socialist, crafted and promoted the plan. It calls for "a 10-year national mobilization" to combat climate change "by eliminating pollution and greenhouse gas emissions as much as technologically feasible" and "meeting 100 percent of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable, and zero-emission energy sources."
- Republicans have roundly rejected the proposal as radical.
- Nearly all of the Democratic senators angling for the party's presidential nomination are co-sponsoring the non-binding resolution, including Kamala Harris of California, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Cory Booker of New Jersey. Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown has not, though he told reporters at a breakfast Tuesday hosted by the Christian Science Monitor that he shares concerns about climate change.
- Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders is one of the 11 co-sponsors.
- Cruz mocked the proposal.
- "This Green New Deal proposes eliminating all carbon emissions, which would mean necessarily banning all cars. It would mean banning all airplanes," he said. That, he said, would make it "more than amusing to see among other things Democrats from states like Hawaii trying to explain how exactly you get to and from Hawaii with no airplanes. I'm looking forward to seeing the round-trip train tracks going to Hawaii."
- Other provisions, he asserted, would "get rid of all cows because cows are given to flatulence.... That's just silliness."
- Cruz made the comments in an hour-long call with donors aimed at raising at least \$25,000 to replenish his campaign coffers, which he largely depleted fending off Beto O'Rourke in November. The former El Paso congressman and potential 2020 contender held Cruz below 51 percent.
- Cruz took aim at other provisions, including some that don't actually exist. He asserted, for instance, that the plan includes "socialist payments and a guaranteed income to people who are quote 'unwilling to work.' You know, there used to be a term for people who are unwilling to work. They're called bums."
- The resolution does not refer to people unwilling to work, nor does it call for guaranteed income for all. It does call for ensuring "high quality health care" and "economic security" through higher wages and expanded union rights.
- Cruz emphasized that he has no objection to providing a safety net for the elderly or people with a disability.
- "We're a compassionate society and those who are unable to work, we have always cared for. But if some someone is simply unwilling to work and just wants to sit on their couch and watch TV all day long, well they're welcome to do that. But then they should not have an entitlement to your or my labor and to the tax payments that we pay in."
- "That," he added, "is an extreme position that you would write off as OK, that's just sort of a nutty fringe position, except that we're seeing Democratic presidential candidates rush over to embrace this kooky Green New Deal."

McCain Knew Our Greatness Was Imperiled

DAVID LEONHARDT, *The New York Times*, Editorial, August 27, 2018

- John McCain was no moderate. He won Barry Goldwater's Arizona seat in 1986 and was, for the most part, a fitting heir to Goldwater. McCain supported a smaller federal government, a hawkish foreign policy and the typical Republican positions on abortion, guns and other issues.
- But McCain pursued his conservative ends through means that are depressingly rare in today's Republican Party. McCain believed in the American ideals of pluralistic democracy. He despised autocracy. He was willing to accept defeat when his side lost a political battle. He pushed for an election system not dominated by the wealthy. He came to reject racism as a political strategy. And in his dying months, McCain was one of the only Republicans to oppose President Trump not just with his words, but also with his vote.
- In a recent *New Yorker* essay about Charles de Gaulle, Adam Gopnik described the French leader in ways that left me thinking about McCain's legacy. "His life is proof that unapologetic right-wing politics do not necessarily bend toward absolutism," Gopnik wrote. "They can also sometimes stiffen the spine of liberal democracy."
- The absolutism and radicalism of today's Republican Party is the biggest threat to the country that McCain served and loved. It has left the United States impotent to deal with our greatest challenges -- inequality, alienation, climate change and a global drift toward autocracy. Congress, as McCain said last year, is "getting nothing done." Meanwhile, threats to American power and interests grow.
- I expect the Trump presidency to end poorly for Republicans, in some combination of disgrace, unpopularity and defeat. If it does, at least some Republicans will be looking for ways to reinvent their party. They will want an antidote to Trumpism, a set of ideas that manage to be conservative and anti-Trump.
- They could do a lot worse than a version of McCainism. I'm well aware that McCain could be maddeningly inconsistent and flawed. He equivocated about the Confederate flag in 2000. He too often acquiesced to Mitch McConnell's torching of Senate norms. For goodness sake, McCain decided Sarah Palin should be vice president. As he himself admitted, he should have done much more to fight Republican extremism.
- But the sum total of his career still represents a meaningful alternative to Trump, McConnell and the rest of today's Republican leadership. At McCain's best, as Barack Obama said this weekend, he displayed "a fidelity to something higher -- the ideals for which generations of Americans and immigrants alike have fought, marched and sacrificed."
- What would a Republican Party more in the mold of John McCain look like?
- It would, for starters, stop cowing to Trump and stand up for American national security. It would investigate Russian cyberattacks and the possibility, as McCain put it, "that the president of the United States might be vulnerable to Russian extortion." Many of McCain's colleagues remembering him as a brave patriot are proving themselves to be neither.
- Second, a more McCain-like Republican Party would understand that racism is both immoral and, in the long term, politically ruinous. McCain had a multiracial family -- the kind that is increasingly America's future. Rather than scapegoat immigrants, he took risks to pass immigration reform. After Charlottesville, he declared, "White supremacists aren't patriots, they're traitors."
- Third, McCain believed in democracy and its vital, fragile institutions. He accepted his two haunting presidential defeats honorably. He has reportedly chosen the victors in those campaigns -- Obama and George W. Bush -- to deliver eulogies at his funeral. Most significantly, McCain fought for campaign-finance laws to reduce the influence of plutocrats.
- Fourth, McCain understood that democracy sometimes means moving on. He voted against Obamacare -- a reflection of his small-government conservatism. But he also voted, crucially, against its repeal -- a reflection of his small-c conservatism. In doing so, he acted as a modern-day Eisenhower, a Republican willing to accept an expansion of the safety net for the good of the country.
- Finally, McCain recognized that the military wasn't the only way that Washington could use its awesome power for good. When I interviewed him during the 2008 presidential campaign, he described his economic hero as Theodore Roosevelt -- a "free-enterprise, capitalist, full-bore guy" who realized that prosperity depended on government agencies "that need to do their job as well." The outlook led him to favor policies (albeit too sporadically) to fight climate change and expand community colleges.
- Imagine how different our politics could be if even some Republicans -- à la T.R. -- occasionally took the side of the little guy against corporate behemoths. And even if you disagreed with McCain on as many issues as I did, imagine if the Republican Party ultimately came to resemble him more than Trump.
- Above all, McCain believed in American greatness -- as a reality, not a slogan. He knew that the United States could play a unique role in the world, as a defender of freedom and human dignity. He also knew that the role was anything but assured. It required hard work, good choices, compromise and sacrifice.
- McCain's final message for his country was a warning: Our greatness is in peril.

Democratic Presidential Contender Pete Buttigieg Asks if Talk about Freedom has 'Gone Off the Rails' with Anti-Abortion Laws in Alabama and Georgia

By Rick Pearson, *Chicago Tribune* (IL), May 16, 2019

5 May 16--Democratic presidential aspirant Pete Buttigieg accused Republicans of co-opting the terms "freedom" and "security" in the national mindset, and questioned whether talk "about freedom in this country has gone off the rails" following recent laws in Alabama and Georgia that outlaw virtually all abortions.

Speaking to about 300 people at the City Club of Chicago, Buttigieg also said the election of Donald Trump represented a desire by some in the Midwest to "burn the house down" in Washington. Vowing a return to normal should not be part of a Democratic presidential candidate's rhetorical repertoire, he said.

10 "Any suggestion that our party's message ought to be to promise a return to normal overlooks the extent to which normal hasn't been working for a lot of people. What we've got now isn't working either. But that's exactly why we have to create a new normal," the eight-year mayor of South Bend, Ind., said.

Buttigieg, now part of a field of about two dozen contenders, cited abortion rights in discussing his view of freedom, saying, "I don't think that you are free in this country if your reproductive health can be criminalized by government."

He said if elected he would seek judicial nominees who "have the same sense of freedom" about abortion rights amid concerns that the Alabama and Georgia laws could lead to the Supreme Court overturning its landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized the procedure.

20 "With those rights under assault, I think the full range of responses needs to be contemplated because we can't just keep having this play out one Supreme Court appointment at a time," Buttigieg told reporters when asked whether abortion rights should be codified in federal law or put into the Constitution.

Overturning *Roe v. Wade* was "one of the rationales" that Trump offered for people to elect him, Buttigieg said.

"Pretty much everything about this president is anathema to the values, for example, of the religious right and yet he was able to build a coalition largely around a promise -- explicit or implicit -- to overturn *Roe*," he said.

25 "This is, of course, precisely the intent of the Alabama law and the Georgia law. They know that under current case law, if you believe in the idea of *stare decisis*, that those laws are unconstitutional," Buttigieg said, referring to the legal principal of precedent. "They know it because they want to test the constitutionality with a new referee and see if they get a different answer."

Buttigieg said abortion rights should fit in with those who believe freedom means less government.

30 "This is not an easy choice for anybody to face, and I would be loathe to tell anybody facing that situation what the right thing to do is. But that's exactly the point. I'm a government official," he said.

"I don't view myself as belonging in that conversation, and to see in Alabama that if someone is raped and she seeks an abortion, the doctor who treats her will be penalized with a longer prison term than her rapist, makes me question about whether the discussion about freedom in this country has gone off the rails," he said.

35 Buttigieg, 37, a gay military veteran and Oxford scholar whose earlier work as a consultant for worldwide management firm McKinsey & Co. included a stint in Chicago, has seen what he called his "admittedly improbable" candidacy gain traction in a crowded field.

Viewing himself as a representative of parts of the industrial Midwest that voted for Trump amid anger at the economy and employment fears over globalization and technology, Buttigieg chastised the Republican

40 president's slogan, "Make America Great Again."

In South Bend, he said, "we had to accept the future was going to be different, and let's be honest about it -- be honest that certain things weren't coming back but we were, and then talk about how."

"That's why I think there's no such thing as an honest politics built around the word, 'again,'" he said.

45 "But I do believe that there can be a very optimistic politics for the industrial Midwest, and that's so important at a time when we're being characterized by the White House and caricatured sometimes by the commentators as a place where the only way to our heart is through nostalgia and through resentment," he said.

Buttigieg said it was time to "stop talking about freedom and security like they belong on one side of the aisle, and let's have an adult conversation about what it's going to take to do something about that in our country."

On the security front, he cited concerns over cybersecurity, particularly involving election security, but also 50 warned against U.S. military involvement in foreign countries without express congressional authorization. He also said the nation should unite behind a national project aimed at dealing with climate change.

But Buttigieg said the election of Trump as president in 2016 was notable for what it said about the state of the nation and its politics and governance.

"You don't even get a presidency like this unless something is wrong," he said.

A Trump Rally Can Feel like an Alternate Universe

Michael A. Cohen, *The Boston Globe* (MA), November 4, 2018

INDIANAPOLIS - To attend a Donald Trump rally is to temporarily reside in an alternate universe. The president assaults the truth with lie after lie after lie. They come so fast and furious it's impossible to keep track. As you're writing down one, Trump spews out another, and already you're behind: America is experiencing "the best economy in the history of our country." (It's not.) Republicans will not only safeguard Medicare but "will always protect patients with pre-existing conditions." (In fact, Congressional Republicans and the White House have consistently supported legislation — and a pending federal lawsuit — to strip away such protections.) Democrats want to "raid Medicare to give benefits to illegal immigrants" like welfare and free education. They want "open borders." They want to shut down steel mills. They want to invite in "caravan after caravan." (None of this is remotely true.)

In the Trump ecosystem, facts don't matter. But it's not just the president who is vomiting out mistruths. Over and over on Friday night, Trump partisans at a jam-packed pre-election rally in a high school gym in Indianapolis regurgitated the president's cavalcade of lies. Undocumented immigrants are soaking up resources and taking tax dollars. "Kick them out ... They're invading the country," said a middle-aged man wearing an obligatory MAGA hat. How has illegal immigration affected him personally, I asked? He sputtered at first to come up with an answer and then told me his daughter lives in Texas and, with his voice and anger rising, "I don't want anyone messing with my daughter."

I understand, I said, hoping to deflate the situation. "And my grandkids too," he yelled. Undocumented immigrants are costing American taxpayers billions of dollars. They're bringing crime and chain migration. It's the same refrain, heard ad nauseum on Fox News, sent around in emails, posted to Facebook pages, and then spewed out at Trump's political rallies. Some even praised Trump for "building the wall." I didn't have the heart to tell them that the wall is one of many promises Trump hasn't kept. But facts are for liberals and the fake news. When I asked about the children being separated from their parents at the border ... well sure, that's sad, but it was the parent's fault for putting them in harm's way. As disconcerting as it may be for Trump's fans to mimic his mistruths, it can barely hold a handle to the cult-like manner in which they talk about the president: "He's been great on absolutely everything." "Everything Trump does is perfect. Everything he does is right." "Everything he does I support 100 percent." "I like everything he does. He's the best."

"He's one of us. He's done everything he said he would do." "For the first time I have pride in the President of the United States." In the Cult of Trump, Trump can do no wrong. Trump can only be wronged. What about the divisive rhetoric, like calling Democrats "evil people"? "I see the president as someone who wants to bring the country together," said Dawn Sievers, a grandmother of six. "Most of the media has gotten away from telling the whole truth ... that in itself brings divisiveness." What about his tweets? "Well, at first that was kind of annoying," explained Molly decked out in a Trump/Pence 2020 t-shirt, but then added that the president has "got to get his message out somehow." It was like talking to a parent who thinks their child can do no wrong. Every bad act is excused. Every transgression is overlooked.

I can't decide if Trump's fans are blindingly devoted to them, or if they've decided that once they've pledged their support to a racist, xenophobic, impulse-challenged man-child, they can't afford to psychologically step back and say "maybe our devotion has been misplaced." In for a dime; in for a dollar. Or maybe they don't love the man, but they love his willingness to say cold, angry, and mean things that they've long thought but never before felt comfortable articulating. I hadn't been to a Trump rally in nearly two years, but the aesthetic had hardly changed. Empathy and compassion are in short supply. Poetry is nowhere to be found — just ire, frustration, and umbrage. The loudest ovations are for Trump's angriest statements; the chuckles are for when Trump insults the news media or makes a self-serving joke. What Trump's supporters seem to want more than anything else is to be told that the man in the boxy suit and red power tie shares their resentments; that their enemies are his enemies, and that his prejudices sound like the ones they spout off about at their dining room table. For an interminable hour or so, Trump tells them exactly what they want to hear.

Michael A. Cohen's column appears regularly in the Globe. Follow him on Twitter @speechboy71.

Why MPs will ultimately have to back Theresa May's deal

Vernon Bogdanor, *The Guardian*, 20 Mar 2019

Britain faces a constitutional crisis, according to many, including at least one cabinet minister. But is it a crisis simply because the rules regulating parliament make life difficult for the government?

A conflict between government and parliament is almost inevitable when, as with Brexit, the government cannot command a majority of votes in the Commons. But there is a deeper crisis within parliament itself. MPs have put the European Union (Withdrawal) Act on the statute book, which entails us leaving the EU on 29 March, in just eight days' time.

But they have rejected every proposal to make Brexit a reality. They have twice rejected the deal; and they have also three times voted against amendments proposing that Britain remain in the customs union or the internal market.

Last week MPs also rejected a no-deal Brexit, while an absolute majority of MPs rejected a "people's vote" by 334 votes to 85. Without a further referendum, it is hardly possible for MPs to revoke article 50 and reverse Brexit. In addition, on 16 January MPs decided not to replace the government which is steering the Brexit process, when they rejected a motion of no confidence that could have precipitated a general election.

MPs have willed Brexit without willing the means to secure it. If MPs do nothing, Britain will leave the EU next week without a deal, so exposing the country to the full panoply of EU tariffs and regulations as well as a hard border in Ireland.

MPs have put Theresa May in the difficult and perhaps humiliating position of seeking an extension to the Brexit date from Brussels. That requires the unanimous consent of the other 27 member states. They may well agree the short extension she requested today, until 30 June. But they will expect a credible justification for a possible extension and its duration. An extension is a method, not a solution. The 27 will need a clear indication from the government both on the process to be followed and the proposed outcome.

Presumably the fact that MPs could not make up their minds would not seem a "credible justification". A short extension leaves no time for parliament to reconsider alternative models, already rejected – such as remaining permanently in the customs union, as proposed by Labour, or the Norway option, which has been put forward by a number of MPs. It is in any case doubtful if either could command a majority. They would certainly not command a majority among Conservatives.

Remaining in the customs union would prevent Britain pursuing an independent trade policy; and for many Conservatives that was the whole point of Brexit. Theresa May's deal does in fact secure most of the advantages of the customs union without its obligations.

Remaining in the internal market entails freedom of movement, which most Conservative MPs, and indeed most Brexit voters, reject. It is in any case rather late for MPs to consider mobilising behind an alternative. They have had two years to do that. It is also a bit late for MPs to object to the Northern Ireland backstop, which was first agreed by the government in December 2017.

Any extension beyond 30 June, which May says she opposes, would require Britain to take part in the European parliament elections at the end of May. And EU leaders would not relish allowing Britain to take part in elections that would almost certainly result in Nigel Farage and his fellow Brexiteers being returned to the European parliament, and which would allow Britain to take part in EU budget negotiations and the appointment of a new commission.

The choice, therefore, remains stark. Either the Commons votes for Theresa May's deal, or Britain leaves without a deal.

Margaret Thatcher once declared: there is no alternative. There is now, so it seems, ultimately no alternative to May's deal.

Trump Invokes One of the Worst Native American Massacres to Mock Elizabeth Warren

Tim Elfrink *The Washington Post*, January 14, 2019

One hundred years after U.S. soldiers killed and maimed hundreds of Sioux men, women and children at the Wounded Knee massacre, Congress formally apologized in 1990 by expressing its “deep regret on behalf of the United States.”

On Sunday night, President Trump used that same massacre as a punchline in his latest broadside against Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), the Democratic presidential hopeful whom he regularly calls “Pocahontas” in jeering reference to her claims of American Indian heritage.

Critics found that message jarring, even from a president who has repeatedly ignored calls from politicians on both sides of the aisle, historians and Native American groups to stop calling Warren “Pocahontas.”

“+300 of my people were massacred at Wounded Knee. Most were women and children,” tweeted Ruth H. Hopkins, a Dakota/Lakota Sioux writer who has contributed at *Teen Vogue*, the *Guardian* and elsewhere. “This isn’t funny, it’s cold, callous, and just plain racist.”

Trump’s tweet came amid another extraordinary late-night Twitter barrage as the president — battered by public blame for the ongoing government shutdown and new bombshells about his links to Russia — also lashed out at Post owner Jeffrey P. Bezos and quoted from a racially charged immigration column by Pat Buchanan.

His attack on Warren, who officially jumped into the 2020 presidential race last month, drew perhaps the biggest reaction online thanks to its invocation of a particularly disgraceful chapter of American history.

In late 1890, 470 U.S. soldiers intercepted a group of Chief Big Foot’s Sioux, who had been heading south across the plains toward a refuge, according to an account by Mark Hirsch, a historian at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian. The soldiers led the Sioux, who had 106 warriors and roughly 250 women and children, to a camp at Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota.

When the U.S. commander, Col. James W. Forsyth, ordered Big Foot’s people to surrender their weapons on Dec. 29, 1890, shooting suddenly erupted and the soldiers surrounding the camp began indiscriminately gunning down the Native Americans.

“Women and children were riddled with shrapnel. People ran, but the soldiers pursued them. Bodies were later discovered three miles from camp,” Hirsch wrote. “When the smoke cleared, 146 men, women, and children lay dead. Others perished from their wounds or froze to death in the hills.”

Trump has already faced backlash for his use of “Pocahontas” to describe Warren, particularly after he unleashed the taunt at a November 2017 event honoring Navajo code talkers.

In October, Warren released the result of a DNA test showing that she did have Native American ancestors a number of generations ago — a result that only egged the president on and also drew criticisms from the Cherokee Nation and others. Trump and his administration have accused Warren of unfairly benefiting from her claims of Native American heritage while she was a professor at Harvard, an allegation fact-checkers have debunked.

For many critics, Trump’s use of the mass killing at Wounded Knee — along with his reference to the Battle of the Little Bighorn, where hundreds of U.S. soldiers and American Indians died in Gen. George Armstrong Custer’s infamous last stand in 1876 — took his Warren attacks to a new level.

“When the extent of your criminality is so transparent that your only defense is deflection through racist offensive, it is seriously time for you to leave,” tweeted Honor Sachs, an assistant professor of history at the University of Colorado at Boulder who has written for *The Washington Post* about the history of the Pocahontas story being used by white supremacists.

The National Congress of American Indians on Monday issued a statement denouncing Trump’s reference to Wounded Knee.

“We condemn in the strongest possible terms the casual and callous use of these events as part of a political attack,” the organization’s president, Jefferson Keel, said in the statement. “Hundreds of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho people lost their lives at the hands of the invading U.S. Army during these events, and their memories should not be desecrated as a rhetorical punch line.”

That wasn’t Trump’s only late-night tweet on Sunday that drew notice for its racial overtones. Shortly after his Wounded Knee message, Trump posted two tweets quoting from a Pat Buchanan column to support his push for a wall on the southern border.

Buchanan’s column explicitly accuses Democrats of wanting to encourage immigration because, he writes, the party is “hostile to white men because the smaller the share of the U.S. population that white men become, the sooner that Democrats inherit the national estate.”

“The only way to greater ‘diversity,’ the golden calf of the Democratic Party, is to increase the number of women, African-Americans, Asians and Hispanics, and thereby reduce the number of white men,” Buchanan writes in the column. (...)

Several Tell Board to Reinstate Helen Keller, Female Pilots in Texas curriculum

Julie Chang, *Austin American-Statesman* (TX), November 13, 2018

- The State Board of Education on Tuesday will take a preliminary vote on a proposal to eliminate Hillary Clinton and Helen Keller, among other historical figures, from the state's social studies curriculum.
- 5 Many of the 30-plus people who spoke before the board Tuesday morning expressed concerns on the removal of Keller and the Women Airforce Service Pilots, civilian women who flew in non-combat roles during World War II; the training base was in Sweetwater, Texas.
- "Without broad academic knowledge of Helen Keller my daughter and other deaf blind-students cease to exist. They don't make sense. Their deaf-blindness, their disabilities and what could have been emerging abilities and value to our communities have no point of reference," said Robbie Caldwell, the Austin regional coordinator for 10 The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas and the mother of a 17-year-old deaf-blind daughter. About a half-dozen family members of the female pilot group touted the historical relevance of their mothers and grandmothers' service in the war. (...)
- A bulk of people also spoke on the way the social studies curriculum casts the Arab-Israeli conflict by requiring 15 students to "explain how Arab rejection of the State of Israel has led to ongoing conflict." Arab supporters criticized the language as bias if not false, saying Palestinians have recognized the State of Israel. Israeli supporters, speaking positively of the particular curriculum standard, rattled off a list of Arab nations that have never had relations with Israel.
- "Currently, 19 of the 21 countries that make up the Arab League do not recognize the State of Israel. Fact. Sixteen 20 of these Arab countries do not admit persons with Israel passports into their countries. Fact," said Boerne resident Roy White with the group Truth in Textbooks.
- Some speakers also rejected another part of the curriculum that has students learn about the "development of radical Islamic fundamentalism and the subsequent use of terrorism by some of its adherents."
- "The fundamentals of any religion are the core of its religion. To tie Islam and terrorism and fundamentalism all 25 together is to say that terrorism is a fundamental part of Islam, which it absolutely is not," said Shifa Bhatti, a middle school teacher in the Mansfield school district.
- Nobody spoke in favor of reinstating Clinton Tuesday morning.
- The Republican-majority board had appointed earlier this year groups of education professionals to cut down the amount of social studies material that elementary, middle and high school students must learn. The work groups 30 eliminated references to Clinton, the first female presidential nominee of a major U.S. political party, and Helen Keller, the disability rights advocate who was the first deaf and blind person to graduate from college.
- Also removed was Barry Goldwater, the 1964 Republican presidential nominee who was the first ethnically Jewish presidential nominee from a major party and is considered the progenitor of the modern conservative movement.
- With most of their discussion instead centered on Alamo-related instruction, board members in September 35 tentatively approved adopting the work groups' recommendations. After Tuesday's vote and a final vote on Friday by the board, the curriculum is slated to go into effect next school year.
- Although the work groups had recommended eliminating the late evangelist Billy Graham and Moses from certain areas of the curriculum, board members singled them out to be reinstated.
- The board's action drew sharp criticism from disability rights proponents as well as liberal activists who accused the 40 panel of partisanship.
- The board's chairwoman Donna Bahorich, R-Houston, has since penned an op-ed published in multiple publications defending the board's duties to streamline the state's social studies curriculum and to "yield back significant time to teachers." She added that the curriculum doesn't keep teachers from teaching material not included in the state standards.
- 45 Liberal activists and scholars also have criticized the board for including in the curriculum other causes of the Civil War besides slavery, including sectionalism and state's rights.
- "In doing so, the TEKS standards resurrect the 'Lost Cause' myth, a long discredited version of history first promoted in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to glorify the Confederate past and reinforce white supremacist policies such as the disenfranchisement of African-Americans and Jim Crow segregation," according to 50 an open letter signed by nearly 200 historians and university professors.
- The letter also criticized the curriculum for singling out southern Democrats as opponents of civil rights legislation. Work groups did not change this particular curriculum standard, which was first included in 2010 when the State Board of Education was considered more politically divisive than it is now.
- "In fact, a number of leading Republicans, including Texas Sen. John Tower and GOP presidential nominee Barry 55 Goldwater of Arizona, also opposed the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964," according to a news release from Austin-based Texas Freedom Network.
- Veterans and their families are also unhappy with the removal of elementary school instruction of the Women Airforce Service Pilots.
- "During WWII, the WASP flew planes from factories to airbases, towed live targets for anti-aircraft training, test- 60 piloted newly-repaired and experimental aircraft, trained male pilots, transported vital equipment and personnel, and much more," according to a petition posted on the Sweetwater-based National WASP WWII Museum's website.

Trump Wants Socialism for the Rich, Harsh Capitalism for the Rest

Robert Reich, *San Francisco Chronicle* (CA), February 15, 2019

"America will never be a socialist country," Donald Trump declared in his State of the Union address. Someone should alert Trump that America is now a hotbed of socialism. But it is socialism for the rich.

- 5 Everyone else is treated to harsh capitalism.
In the conservative mind, socialism means getting something for doing nothing. That pretty much describes the \$21 billion saved by the nation's largest banks last year thanks to Trump's tax cuts, some of which went into enormous bonuses for bank executives. On the other hand, more than 4,000 lower-level bank employees got a big dose of harsh capitalism. They lost their jobs.
- 10 Banks that are too big to fail (courtesy of the 2008 bank bailout) enjoy a hidden subsidy of some \$83 billion a year, because creditors facing less risk accept lower interest on deposits and loans. Last year, Wall Street's bonus pool was \$31.4 billion. Take away the hidden subsidy and the bonus pool disappears.
Trump and his appointees at the Federal Reserve are easing the bank requirements put in place after the bailout. They'll make sure the biggest banks remain too big to fail.
- 15 Trump is promoting socialism for the rich and harsh capitalism for everyone else in other ways. Since he was elected, GM has received more than \$600 million in federal contracts plus \$500 million in tax breaks. Some of this has gone into the pockets of GM executives.
GM Chairman and CEO Mary Barra raked in almost \$22 million in total compensation in 2017 alone. But GM employees are subject to harsh capitalism. GM is planning to lay off more than 14,000 workers and
- 20 close three assembly plants and two component factories in North America by the end of 2019.
When he was in business, Trump perfected the art of using bankruptcy to shield himself from the consequences of bad decisions - socialism for the rich at its worst - while leaving employees twisting in the wind.
Now, all over America, executives who run their companies into the ground are getting gold-plated exit
- 25 packages while their workers get pink slips.
Sears is doling out \$25 million to the executives who stripped its remaining assets and drove it into bankruptcy, but the company has no money for the thousands of workers it laid off.
As Pacific Gas and Electric hurtles toward bankruptcy, the person who was in charge of the company when deadly infernos roared through Northern California last year (caused in part by PG&E's faulty equipment)
- 30 has departed with a cash severance package of \$2.5 million. The PG&E executive in charge of gas operations when records were allegedly falsified left with \$6.9 million in 2018.
Under socialism for the rich, you can screw up big time and still reap big rewards. Equifax's Richard Smith retired in 2017 with an \$18 million pension in the wake of a security breach that exposed the personal information of some 143 million consumers to hackers.
- 35 Wells Fargo's Carrie Tolstedt departed with a \$125 million exit package after being in charge of the unit that opened more than 2 million unauthorized customer accounts.
An estimated 60 percent of America's wealth is now inherited. Many of today's super-rich have never done a day's work in their lives.
Trump's response has been to cut the estate tax to apply only to estates valued at more than \$22 million per
- 40 couple. Mitch McConnell is now proposing that the estate tax be repealed altogether.
What about the capitalist principles that people earn what they're worth in the market, and that economic gains should go to those who deserve them?
America is on the cusp of the largest inter-generational wealth transfer in history. As rich Baby Boomers expire over the next three decades, an estimated \$30 trillion will go to their children.
- 45 Those children will be able to live off of the income these assets generate, and then leave the bulk of them to their own heirs, tax-free. (Capital gains taxes don't apply to the soaring values of stocks, bonds, mansions and other assets of wealthy people who die before they're sold.)
After a few generations of this, almost all of the nation's wealth will be in the hands of a few thousand nonworking families.
- 50 To the conservative mind, the specter of socialism conjures up a society in which no one is held accountable, and no one has to work for what they receive. Yet that's exactly the society Trump and the Republicans are promoting for the rich.
Meanwhile, most Americans are subject to an increasingly harsh and arbitrary capitalism in which they're working harder but getting nowhere, and have less security than ever.
- 55 They need thicker safety nets and deserve a bigger piece of the economic pie. If you want to call this socialism, fine. I call it fair.

Robert Reich's latest book is *"The Common Good,"* and his newest documentary is *"Saving Capitalism."*

The Independent Group will at last give us real opposition to Brexit

Gina Miller, *The Guardian*, 20 Feb 2019

Democracy abhors a vacuum. The realignment that is happening now in our politics is the inevitable consequence of 62% of the electorate feeling politically homeless. A majority of our people who feel that neither of our main parties share their values, principles and integrity.

The decision of Heidi Allen, Anna Soubry and Sarah Wollaston to join the existing Labour members of the Independent Group begins what I hope will be a process that will finally give a voice to a so-far silent majority of voters. I admire them for being willing to put their heads above the parapet, to defy the onslaught of abuse I know too well, and to be brave enough to look beyond a vote taken nearly three years ago and to acknowledge the clear and present danger Brexit now poses to the livelihoods, jobs and quality of life of both leavers and remainers.

This is, as Soubry has said, is about so much more than Brexit. The antisemitism in the Labour party, the Islamophobia in the Conservative party, and the thuggish new tone to political discourse have all combined to alienate vast swaths of the electorate.

Ordinary, decent citizens are sick, too, of the new deprivations that each day they are now being expected to reconcile themselves to in the name of Brexit – deprivations never spelt out during the referendum campaign. They see only too clearly how the best interests of constituents are less important to all too many of our MPs than the best interests of their parties. Jeremy Corbyn scolded Theresa May in Prime Minister's Questions today for paying no heed to the economic slowdown, but Labour voters can see that Corbyn, in effectively backing May on Brexit, is aiding and abetting her in precipitating that slowdown, and failing to do his job as leader of the opposition. It must be plain to Tory voters that theirs is no longer the "party of business". One that under Margaret Thatcher promised international investors, such as the Japanese, that if they put their money into the UK they could be confident they would get in return access to the EU marketplace via a customs union. Instead they hear Boris Johnson, the former foreign secretary and a potential party leader, saying "fuck business". They wonder, like traditional Labour voters, what their party now stands for.

It is obvious to voters that Brexit has caused both of our principal parties to take leave of their traditional and historic purposes and principles, if not also their senses.

I believe there was never a huge amount of difference between "one nation" Tories and traditional Labour supporters. It was difficult not to be moved by the obvious warmth with which the Labour MPs who started the Independent Group greeted their new Tory recruits in the Commons. What they clearly share is, above all things, a love of their country.

My hope for this new group is that it, too, can take a constructive approach and that its members can continue to put aside party politics and egos and work together in the national interest. We, the people, now require real opposition on the defining issue of our times. We need to accept our old politics is no longer fit for purpose. Changing membership rules in both the old parties has resulted in more extreme elements coming to the fore with agendas and aims at odds with the vast majority of the memberships. It is no longer good enough when our local MP and the most senior people in the parties we normally vote for are at best ambivalent and at worst contemptuous of our views when the hours to 29 March are ticking down so rapidly.

With real determination and courage, there is still no reason why, even at this late stage, both of our political leaders cannot save their parties by facing down the well-organised and well-funded special interest groups within them. The obvious first response to the ructions they must both now be feeling is to allow their MPs a free vote on Brexit. With no emerging majority in the House of Commons, a public vote seems highly desirable, but, short of that, they must let parliament do what parliament does best, which is to put the interests of the country first.

I welcome the Independent Group as it is committed to saving the country from a catastrophic hard Brexit. That, for now, is good enough for me, and, I suspect, for a great many others.

Last days of the British Eurocrats

The Economist, Feb 14th 2019

"I remember day after the vote so clearly," says one Englishman, who had landed his dream job at the European Commission, the EU's civil service, in June 2016, only weeks before the referendum. "I pretty much burst into tears in a management meeting." Surrounded by senior colleagues in whose footsteps he had hoped to follow, the young Eurocrat saw his ambitions thwarted. "I realised that couldn't happen for me," he sighs.

The British have always been a rare species in Brussels. When the country joined what was then known as the European Economic Community in 1973, a wave of young civil servants saw a career on the continent as a brighter prospect than a desk in Whitehall. But subsequent generations proved harder to recruit. Just 2.8% of the commission's staff and 2.4% of those at the European Council (where heads of government meet) are British, despite the fact that Britain makes up 12.9% of the EU's population. Alongside Britain's elected and appointed representatives, this small group are the last of their kind. When they depart, none of their countrymen will replace them.

On Brexit day, March 29th, Sir Julian King, Britain's representative on the commission, will hand his responsibilities to one of his European colleagues. Britain's 73 MEPs will pack up their offices and send their assistants home. Many are planning to pursue charitable concerns. Some, such as Seb Dance, a Labour MEP from London, want to work at rebuilding international relationships they believe Brexit has broken. Others are tempted to enter the Westminster fray. But Richard Ashworth, a Conservative-turned-independent MEP, who co-wrote the EU's "Bible" of financial regulation, has had enough of politics. "When I walk away, I'll close the door and do something completely different," he says.

A few MEPs will celebrate their redundancy. "They make me sick," says Gerard Batten, leader of the UK Independence Party, of his parliamentary colleagues. "These men—they were great Europeans," he says, gesturing to the pictures of Napoleon, Mozart and Michelangelo's David on his office wall. Today's passengers on the Brussels "gravy train" do not compare, he says. After Brexit, Mr Batten hopes to retire—though "it depends what needs to be done" regarding Britain's escape from Europe.

The situation is different for civil servants. Although EU rules say that staff must be citizens of a member state, they allow for some exceptions. The EU has said that British citizens should not be punished for Brexit and, in recent weeks, has appointed a couple of British Eurocrats, Michael Shotton and Nicole Smith, to senior roles at the commission's home-affairs and budget directorates. Sir Julian himself arrived in his post after the referendum, and was given a serious portfolio.

In January the commission reiterated promises to its 917 British staff that fonctionnaires, civil servants with permanent jobs, would be able to stay on after Brexit. Those on temporary contracts may be able to finish the agreements they currently have, and the official word is that they can expect to be treated generously in future. But the reality may prove less rosy. Everyone accepts that Britons will have fewer opportunities for promotion after their country leaves. They will be kept away from sensitive areas where there could be conflicts of interest, such as competition, trade, agriculture and the budget. And although jobs are supposedly granted on merit, member states want their nationals in influential positions. British candidates will have no one to lobby for them.

The process has already started. One British commission official has twice been told he needed a second passport to secure promotions, even before Britain's formal departure. He, like many others, has since acquired another EU nationality through a family connection. "But even if you come along waving an Irish passport, people will remember you were British first," worries another dual national.

Mid-career civil servants will be the worst affected. Most British officials are senior and close to retirement, so can ride out the remaining years with little change. But staff in their 40s, one or two steps below the top jobs, will probably have to stop where they are: too young to retire, too old to start again and too British to bag a leading post.

Former state GOP official warns Trump protesters: Montana is an 'open carry state'

Alex Horton, *The Washington Post* (DC), October 18, 2018

Violent political protests have erupted in New York and Portland recently, and former GOP official Will Deschamps Sr. worries Missoula could be next.

5 President Trump will hold a rally in the Montana city Thursday evening, and the former state GOP chairman issued both a vague warning and a taunt aimed at anyone seeking to protest it.

"For all the prospective attendees to the Trump event. Come early," Deschamps, who chaired Republican state activities from 2009 to 2015, wrote Tuesday on Facebook. "Also all you protesters, show up as well.

This is a concealed and open carry state and we know how to use em."

10 Deschamps, a Marine Corps veteran, signed off with "USMC trained," an apparent reference to firearms expertise.

He said Thursday that the post was not to be taken as a directive for people to confront protesters or take weapons to the rally.

"I have genuine concern about what's happening around the United States by these far, far-left antagonistic 35 groups," he told *The Washington Post*.

He was referring to antifascists, or antifa, who clashed with the conservative Proud Boys in Portland and New York. Both groups condone political violence and practice it with some regularity against opponents.

The Secret Service is aware of Deschamps's post, spokesman Jeffrey Adams said Thursday, but he did not answer questions about whether the agency was investigating or whether it had changed its security posture 20 to account for firearms or protesters ahead of the rally.

Neither police nor the Secret Service has contacted Deschamps over the post, he said.

In a follow-up post, he expressed concern that police would be unresponsive during future protests, recalling a sit-in at a GOP office in Missoula earlier this month. Police cited seven people for trespassing, the Associated Press reported.

25 There are few, if any, indications that Missoula will be rocked by violent protests ahead of the Trump rally, which the Missoulian reported could draw 6,000 to 8,000 people.

A "Love Trumps Hate" rally to counter Trump's event will feature children's yoga and a potluck, the radio station MTPR reported. Tootie Welker, of the Western Montana chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, told the Missoulian that members of the group opposed direct action against the Trump rally.

30 "We're not going to play into his hand of being the mob-left like he's wanting to label us right now," Welker said.

Demonstrations aimed at the rally location, an airplane hangar, would be difficult. Attendees will be able to reach the grounds only by shuttle, the Missoulian reported, making any mobilization of protesters near the site a challenging operation.

35 But that has not allayed Deschamps's concerns.

"I think we need to be aware there are folks out there that mean to do [Republicans] harm," he said. Protests on both sides of the ideological spectrum have led to clashes, but he acknowledged that he was unaware of any conservatives killed in such violence.

40 Heather Heyer, one of the people protesting the white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville last year, was killed by a man with Nazi leanings after he allegedly plowed into demonstrators with a car. He was charged with a hate crime.

Erin Erickson, director of Missoula Rises, which organized the "Love Trumps Hate" rally, rebuked Deschamps's post, the Missoulian reported.

45 "I think what he is doing is playing directly into the narrative that President Trump is creating, that the left is an angry mob," Erickson told the paper. "There is no evidence of that in Missoula. I think he's trying to further that narrative without any evidence."

Deschamps conceded that his post may inflame tensions rather than subdue them, but he said that only "those who do harm" — meaning antifa — would be motivated to carry out violent acts.

"There is a different smell in the air right now, and I don't know what's feeding it," he said.

50 Deschamps said that he was in talks with the Secret Service this week to coordinate a meeting with Trump and local veterans but that it fell through. For now, he said, he plans to be among a group of veterans standing behind Trump during the rally.

If he is not barred from the event over the posts, that is.

"I don't know. I might not get in," he said.

Robert Mueller Just Told Congress to Do Its Damn Job

Mueller came as close as possible to saying that he would have indicted Trump for obstruction of justice, if Justice Department policy allowed him to do so.

Joan Walsh, *The Nation*, May 29, 2019

- 5 Independent counsel Robert Mueller finally faced the cameras Wednesday morning. In his quiet way, Mueller's message could not be any louder: He couldn't indict the president, but he suggested Congress should investigate the many instances of likely obstruction of justice by President Trump outlined in his 445-page report—and that Congress has the power to find a president guilty of “wrongdoing.”
- 10 Mueller came as close as possible to saying that he would have indicted Trump for obstruction of justice, if Justice Department policy allowed him to do so. “Charging the president with a crime was not an option we could consider,” he said. But then he delivered the most important information in his 10-minute statement: “If we had confidence the president clearly did not commit a crime, we would have said so. We did not.”
- 15 Respected intelligence analyst Marcy Wheeler tweeted immediately: “Shorter Mueller: That was an impeachment referral, damnit, now act on it.” Presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Elizabeth Warren both used the same “impeachment referral” language. May all the 2020 Democrats join in, and soon.
- 20 Significantly, while Mueller made it clear he'd rather not testify before Congress, he did not say he would refuse to do so, if asked. “Any testimony would not go beyond our report. The work speaks for itself. I would not provide any information that is not in the report.”
- While that might sound disappointing, it isn't. Having Mueller delve into the details of a 445-page report (plus its footnotes) would be must-see TV. Just imagine Mueller being asked by the House Judiciary Committee to narrate the more shocking details of his investigation.
- 25 Here's an example: Let Mueller run down his attempts to confirm whether and how President Trump ordered White House Counsel Don McGahn to fire Mueller, and then to cover up the fact that he ordered McGahn to fire Mueller. I would also enjoy hearing him explain that he didn't charge, say, Donald Trump Jr. or anyone else involved in that sketchy June 2016 meeting with Russian representatives at Trump Tower—the one where the Russians dangled dirt on Hillary Clinton, and
- 30 young Don said via e-mail he “loved” the idea—apparently because it wasn't clear poor dumb Donnie knew he might be breaking the law by taking such a meeting.
- Mueller also scorched the notion that his report found “no collusion” between Trump and the Russians trying to help his campaign, as the president and his team repeatedly screech. The independent counsel said there was “insufficient evidence” to charge collusion, which is very different. I would also enjoy
- 35 hearing Mueller tell Congress part of why they had “insufficient evidence”: that Steve Bannon, Rick Gates, and Erik Prince either erased or somehow “lost” e-mails, texts, Whatsapp conversations and other communications about their interactions with Russian officials during the campaign and the transition period, as his report reveals. #ButHerEmails.
- 40 It took me an hour to recognize this possibly interesting point: Mueller said: “*When* a subject of an investigation obstructs that investigation or lies to investigators, it strikes at the core of the government's effort to find the truth and hold wrongdoers accountable.” Not “*If* a subject...” Maybe that doesn't matter. But... well, the word “if” was certainly available.
- Mueller closed by making two very powerful points. For one, he thanked the lawyers and FBI agents who worked on his investigation, praising them for being “fair and independent” and for acting with
- 45 “the highest integrity.” At a time when Attorney General William Barr—whom Mueller took pains not to criticize—wants to investigate these investigators, Mueller made a strong stand on behalf of their professionalism and decency.
- Second, Mueller chose to end his statement with the finding the president apparently will not accept: “There were multiple, systematic attempts to interfere in the 2016 election.” He clearly doesn't believe
- 50 American leaders are taking that seriously enough, and I agree with him.
- This is a bad day for Donald Trump. But it's also a tough day for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and any other Democratic leader who is trying to slow-walk an impeachment inquiry. In the long relay of justice, Robert Mueller just handed you the baton. Run with it. Today.
- Joan Walsh, *The Nation's* national-affairs correspondent, is the author of *What's the Matter With*
- 55 *White People? Finding Our Way in the Next America.*

Austerity is the wrong prescription for the world's wellbeing

Larry Elliott, *The Guardian*, Sun 7 Oct 2018

The quack doctors rolled into town just as the global economy had come off the critical list. It was 2009 and the message from the austerity medicine show was simple: the only way back to full health was a course of heavy-duty cuts.

Expert opinion was divided. There were other diagnoses available. There were economists who said austerity was the equivalent of going back to the days of blood-letting – but they lost the argument. The prescription, though it varied a bit from country to country, was pretty much the same across the developed world: get those budget deficits down.

The upshot was that the global economy had a relapse and has never fully recovered. Officials at the International Monetary Fund, which meets for its annual meeting in Bali this week, eventually admitted that they had underestimated the power of fiscal policy – taxes and spending – to boost growth when every country was struggling and interest rates were already at rock-bottom levels.

What's more, because austerity choked off growth it took longer than expected to bring budget deficits under control. Voters who had initially been seduced by the idea that everybody needed to do a bit of belt-tightening grew sick of austerity as the consequences of year after year of austerity became increasingly visible.

Even so, the argument between the practitioners of austerity and their opponents continues. It is going on between Theresa May, who says austerity is over, and the UK Treasury, which says it isn't. It is going on between the EU and Italy. And it is going on in academia, between those who think every pound spent by the public sector is a pound unavailable for the private sector, and those who think the idea that you can expand the economy through cuts when it is struggling is a contradiction in terms.

Nor is this a debate exclusive to economists. Eyebrows were raised among health professionals last month at the news that UK life expectancy in 2015 to 2017 had remained virtually unchanged on the previous three years – the first time this had happened since the early 1980s.

Given that the early 1980s was also a time of deep economic recession, there has inevitably been speculation that austerity is to blame for the stalling of life expectancy. In truth, it is too early to draw that conclusion but it is certainly the case that pressures on the NHS have been mounting, even with a ring-fenced budget. Health spending has been flat in real terms since 2010, once a rising population is taken into account – easily the least generous settlement in its 70-year life.

More recently, an article in the *Lancet* by researchers from the University of Washington has analysed the impact of austerity on life expectancy in Greece. The findings make grim reading.

Greece, which endured a slump longer and deeper than the Great Depression in the US, was forced by the so-called troika of the IMF, the EU and the European Central Bank to cut health expenditure at a time when other European countries were raising theirs. The country's death rate had risen by about 5.6% in the decade running up to the first bailout in 2010 but then jumped by 17.6% in the six years that followed. The rate rose three times faster than the rate in Western Europe overall.

Much of the increase in all-age mortality was concentrated in adults, while the *Lancet* article notes: "Many of the causes of death that increased in Greece are potentially responsive to care, including HIV, neoplasms, cirrhosis, neurological disorders, chronic kidney disease, and most types of cardiovascular disease. Improvements in child mortality in Greece have also stagnated since 2000, with increases in deaths due to neonatal haemolytic disease and neonatal sepsis since 2010, both of which might also reflect reduced health system performance."

One reason for rising mortality rates could be an ageing population, which is affecting many other countries as well as Greece. This has been exacerbated by the brain drain of younger workers looking for a better life. However, the *Lancet* article says the rise in mortality is not solely down to demographics because there have been increases in deaths of children under the age of five, suicides among adolescents and younger adults and several treatable cancers in younger adults.

Is a Planned Monument to Women's Rights Racist?

Ginia Bellafante, *The New York Times*, January 17, 2019

Several years ago, before Confederate monuments came toppling down amid collective recognition that American public space needed a politicized renovation, a group of women in New York City started a fund to build a statue in Central Park honoring women's suffrage.

Memorializing any woman at all was going to be novel, because once you got past Alice in Wonderland, who was there really? As it happens, there is not a single statue of a nonfictional woman in the entire park — one of the most heavily visited tourist sites in the world, with more than 25 million people passing through each year — and yet the list of the commemorated is copious enough to include King Wladyslaw Jagiello, the 14th-century grand duke of Lithuania. At which point you might ask yourself: Where is Barney Greengrass?

Given this myopia and absence of logic, it is easy to see how the decision to erect a statue of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton on the Mall, the widest pedestrian path in the park, might be considered an innovation. Last summer the city, in partnership with the Statue Fund, as it came to be called, announced that a design for such a sculpture had been selected, following a competition that had received 91 submissions.

The monument, to be unveiled in 2020 in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, would feature renditions of the two women best known for helping to secure that right. That the suffrage movement was big, broad and diverse is meant to be reflected in the image of a scroll unfolding between Anthony and Stanton like a very long to-do list (procure more rolled oats, seek equality) naming and quoting 22 other women whose contributions were greatly significant.

Of the 22 women selected, seven are African-American. Some of them — Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell — stand as towering figures in the history of American social activism, and yet none is set to receive a statue of her own, in this configuration. In effect, the monument, a maquette of which is on display in Albany, manages to recapitulate the marginalization black women experienced during the suffrage movement to begin with, when, to cite but one example, they were forced by white organizers to congregate in the back during a famous women's march, in Washington, in 1913, coinciding with Woodrow Wilson's inauguration.

While you might think that Gloria Steinem, who has been appalled by the invisibility of women in New York City's public art for decades, might be delighted by the arrival of a suffrage monument, her grievance has outweighed any enthusiasm. "It is not only that it is not enough," she told me recently, it's that it looks as if Anthony and Stanton "are standing on the names of these other women." Other prominent women have raised the same issue.

More literally, the inclusion of the scroll and the way that the women are positioned toward it suggests they are writing the history of suffrage, which is in itself problematic because Anthony and Stanton were two of the coeditors on a six volume compendium — "The History of Women's Suffrage" — that gave them ownership of a narrative that erased the participation of black women in the movement. Though many suffragists came to social justice through abolitionism, they maintained explicit prejudices. Arguing against the notion of black men receiving suffrage at the expense of white women, Stanton once said that it was "better to be the slave of an educated white man than of a degraded black one."

Ms. Steinem made her feelings known to those involved with the Statue Fund, she said, but was told essentially that things were too far along to change course. "I do think we cannot have a statue of two white women representing the vote for all women," she told me. (...)

The women behind the Statue Fund are white, well-intentioned feminists of a certain vintage. They will remind you that they have worked hard for years, without pay, to make this statue a reality, that the controversy saddens them because weren't they doing a good thing? When I called Pam Elam, the president of the fund, one of the first things she told me was that she gave her first speech on women's rights when she was 13. "The bottom line is we are committed to inclusion," she said, "but you can't ask one statue to meet all the desires of the people who have waited so long for recognition."

So much has changed, though, in just the past six or seven years since the idea for the monument was conceived, that insisting on old ways of doing and seeing things feels like a new betrayal. Those involved might begin by understanding "inclusion" as more than a buzzword and commit to evolving their views as the truths of history reveal themselves.

What is forward-moving about reiterating an error in an effort to correct for it?

New Leftist Buzzword: 'Minoritized'

Graham Hillard, *National Review*, May 29, 2019

(...) Confessing one's privilege used to be just the ticket, but lately more and more conservatives have begun to do it. Given the fact that the average leftist has trained himself to distinguish friend from foe after two seconds of conversation, the only surefire way to prove that one belongs is the correct utilization of buzzwords. Just as the precision of one's grammar can signal one's rank among the educated classes, so a willingness to learn and employ *au courant* political terminology can mark one as a progressive in good standing.

Alas, some keys work poorly and no longer open any doors at all. "Woke," at one time a black colloquialism co-opted by the stylish Left, has been largely transformed into a conservative gag word, scare-quoted to within an inch of its life and no longer fit for un-ironic usage. "Handi-capable," a cloying refurbishment of "handicapped," had its moment earlier this decade but seems unlikely, thank God, to endure. "Person of color," an achingly elegant term of art against which "African-American" and "Hispanic" stood no chance, is now so widely known that one hears it on the lips of septuagenarian NPR callers. The only solution to the problem is the creation of something new.

And that something new may very well be the word "minoritized."

For readers who have yet to encounter the term, I can only advise patience and a precautionary dose of antacids. A three-decade-old child of academic journals, "minoritized" was weened in the Left's digital click-bait factories and is coming of age in dorm-room manifestos and on the nation's quads. Unsurprisingly, the word is frequently deployed alongside jargon, the better to disguise its essential stupidity. *Resources for Feminist Research*, for example, asked readers in 1995 to ponder not only "the processes by which literary production gets codified and minoritized" but also "how normative and non-normative identities are administered, established, and contested." *Studies in the Novel*, in an issue released a year later, considered the sorry lot of groups that are "minoritized and majoritized at once," as well as — prepare to be perplexed — "the double fascination of a homosexualized heterosexuality."

In *Slate*, the most recent use of the term occurred last August when staff writer Lili Loofbourow heaped praise on Kenyon writer Keguro Macharia's "remarkable analysis of how even queer theorists of minoritized subcultures appear to have favored status networks over their own declared priorities." And in *Jezebel* in 2017, Aditi Natasha Kini noted, in a discussion of the movies *The Big Sick* and *Master of None*, that "both handle minoritized narratives and non-romantic relationships with a lighter, more sensitive touch than romantic relationships." Nonetheless, she added, "they're both masturbatory fantasies that give brown men the vantage point of a white male cinephile."

To the Left's credit, not every occurrence of "minoritized" in print feels as if it were written by a doctoral candidate in Mumia Abu Jamal Studies. Perhaps the clearest use of the word in recent days occurred in the *Williams Record*, the student newspaper of prestigious Williams College in Massachusetts. Calling upon the institution's trustees to implement neo-segregationist housing policies, termed "affinity housing" by its advocates (Dion J. Pierre has covered the story for *NRO*), the newspaper's undergraduate editors bemoaned not only the plight of "minoritized students" but the presence on campus of "minoritized identities" and "the most minoritized voices" (emphasis mine) — victimhood being, as always, a winnable competition.

Yet it is in these comparatively readable phrases that the sinister nature of the term becomes fully evident. To say that a person belongs to a minority group is to assert a plain fact with little in the way of moral resonance. To call him "minoritized," however, is to declare that *something has been done to him*. The accusation is in the suffix, with "ized" indicating a state or condition that someone else has *caused* or inflicted. Who minoritized those unfortunate Williams students? White people, of course, with their selfish insistence on bearing yet more white children and sending them to Williamstown at the appalling rate of \$56,970 per year, room and board not included. Herein lies the brilliance of "minoritized" as a piece of political rhetoric. It is able, at a single go, to convey both identity status and the presence of enemies. For the contentious age in which we live, it may very well be the perfect word.

Will "minoritized" take its place in the popular lexicon? An enterprising Democratic presidential candidate could certainly give it a nudge. (Beto, it isn't too late to save yourself.) And would the term's wider adoption have any effect at all beyond allowing progressives to recognize one another more easily on Twitter? Could it improve, for example, the state of race relations in this country? That such an idea is laughable is the joke that gives away the game. As Nancy Mairs wrote in her seminal essay "On Being a Cripple," the linguistic evolution "that transformed countries from 'undeveloped' to 'underdeveloped,' then to 'less developed,' and finally to 'developing'" achieved absolutely nothing. "People have continued to starve in those countries during the shift."

So, inevitably, will it be for "minoritized." It may do harm; certainly it will do no good. But doing good isn't really the point, is it?

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A Brexit Deal Has Arrived. Now the Chaos Begins.

By Helen Lewis, *The New York Times*, Nov. 14, 2018

The selection of a new pope is traditionally announced by white smoke drifting from the Vatican chimney. The news of a draft agreement for Britain's withdrawal from the European Union trickled out in a more modern manner: a volley of tweets.

A long waiting period is over. It is now almost 20 months since the British government notified the European Union that it wanted to leave the bloc. It is scheduled to do so on March 29.

The last year and a half has seen British politicians trying to figure out what, exactly, Brexit means. Finally, after months of negotiation, a draft deal has arrived. And now the real chaos can begin.

Prime Minister Theresa May has to accomplish a feat that almost everyone thinks is impossible: make her draft deal look like a success and find the votes to get it through the House of Commons. The trouble is that everybody hates Mrs. May's version of Brexit. Remainers say that it will damage Britain's economy compared with staying in the European Union. Brexiteers say it doesn't fulfill their promise to "take back control" of immigration, regulation and trade.

It is, to be fair to her, perhaps the best deal that could have been achieved under the circumstances: There will be no border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (achieved by keeping all of the United Kingdom in a customs arrangement with the European Union for the moment). European citizens living in Britain can continue to do so. Both sides agree in principle that the free movement of people from Europe will end.

The most contentious part of the agreement is the mechanism for ending it: A collapse in talks on the future relationship would trigger a "backstop" where Britain might have to accept European rules and regulations indefinitely. The mere thought of this is giving hard-line Brexiteers palpitations.

The Conservative Party is split over the wisdom of Brexit as a project, but it is united in disappointment over the form it has taken.

In Parliament on Wednesday, Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, got his best jabs by quoting Mrs. May's own colleagues: Jo Johnson, the anti-Brexit Conservative who quit as transport minister this week, described it as a choice between "vassalage or chaos." Liam Fox, the former trade secretary, once said there would be 40 trade deals lined up "seconds after" Britain left the European Union. So, Mr. Corbyn asked, how many will be ready? (The answer, which the prime minister dodged, is none.) Peter Bone, an arch-Brexiteer, accused Mrs. May of "not delivering the Brexit people voted for."

To further complicate matters, everyone believes that a defeat for Mrs. May would lead to her downfall as prime minister. So members of her cabinet will be considering not just the country's future but also how their choices will look in a future leadership election.

Mrs. May's survival is dependent on the 10 votes of the Democratic Unionist Party, whose base is among Northern Irish Protestants. That party has said for months that it will not accept any deal that peels Northern Ireland away from the rest of Britain and toward the Republic of Ireland. The proposed deal, in the party's opinion, does exactly that, because any future trade deal could see Northern Ireland treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom, keeping it in the European Union's single market for goods, following European Union laws and regulations while the rest of the country does not.

The Labour Party, for its part, was already set to vote against the deal that Mrs. May is presenting. "There is no majority for anything but chaos," a member of Parliament told me last week.

The other options, if Mrs. May's deal fails to get through Parliament, could include a general election — unlikely, as the Conservative Party would have to call one, immediately after humiliating itself — or another referendum. But there is little time for these before March 2019.

Mrs. May used to argue that "no deal is better than a bad deal." Having returned with a bad deal, she now seems to be arguing that no deal is worse. If the country's agreements with the European Union expire without being replaced, Britain will face grounded planes, trucks backed up on highways, and food and medicine shortages.

Would members of Parliament really let a "no deal" Brexit go ahead? The terrifying possibility is that they might not be able to stop it, simply because it is the only option left.

Is the United States on the Verge of Another Civil War?

Victor Davis Hanson, *San Francisco Chronicle* (CA), September 27, 2018

Americans keep dividing into two hostile camps.

It seems the country is back to 1860 on the eve of the Civil War, rather than in 2018, during the greatest age of affluence, leisure and freedom in the history of civilization.

The ancient historian Thucydides called the civil discord that tore apart the fifth century B.C. Greek city-states "stasis." He saw stasis as a bitter civil war between the revolutionary masses and the traditionalist middle and upper classes. Something like that ancient divide is now infecting every aspect of American life.

Americans increasingly are either proud of past U.S. traditions, ongoing reform and current American exceptionalism, or they insist that the country was hopelessly flawed at its birth and must be radically reinvented to rectify its original sins.

No sphere of life is immune from the subsequent politicization: not movies, television, professional sports, late-night comedy or colleges. Even hurricanes are typically leveraged to advance political agendas.

What is causing America to turn differences into these bitter hatreds - and why now?

The internet and social media often descend into an electronic lynch mob. In a nanosecond, an insignificant local news story goes viral. Immediately hundreds of millions of people use it to drum up the evils or virtues of either progressivism or conservatism.

Anonymity is a force multiplier of these tensions. Fake online identities provide cover for ever greater extremism - on the logic that no one is ever called to account for his or her words.

Speed is also the enemy of common sense and restraint. Millions of bloggers rush to be the first to post their take on a news event, without much worry about whether it soon becomes a "fake news" moment of unsubstantiated gossip and fiction.

Globalization has both enriched and impoverished - and also further divided - America. Those whose muscular labor could be outsourced abroad to less expensive, less regulated countries were liable to lose their jobs or find their wages slashed. They were written off as "losers." Americans whose professional expertise profited from vast new world markets became even richer and preened as "winners."

Geography - history's intensifier of civil strife - further fueled the growing economic and cultural divide. Americans are increasingly self-selecting as red and blue states.

Liberals gravitate to urban coastal-corridor communities of hip culture, progressive lifestyles and lots of government services.

Conservatives increasingly move to the lower-tax, smaller-government and more traditional heartland.

Lifestyles in San Francisco and Toledo, Ohio, are so different that it's almost as if they're two different planets.

Legal, diverse, meritocratic and measured immigration has always been America's great strength. Assimilation, integration and intermarriage within the melting pot used to turn new arrivals into grateful Americans in a generation or

two. But when immigration is often illegal, not diverse and arriving in an enormous wave, then balkanization follows. Currently, the country hosts 60 million nonnatives - the largest number of immigrants in America's history.

Yet unlike the past, America often does not ask new immigrants to learn English and assimilate as quickly as possible. Immigration is instead politicized. Newcomers are seen as potentially useful voting blocs.

Tribalism is the new American norm. Gender, sexual orientation, religion, race and ethnicity are now essential, not incidental, to who we are.

Americans scramble to divide into victimized blocs. Hyphenated and newly accented names serve as advertisements that particular groups have unique affiliations beyond their shared Americanism.

America is often the target of unrealistic criticism - as if it is suddenly toxic because it is not perfect. Few appreciate that the far worse alternatives abroad are rife with racism, sexism, civil strife, corruption and poverty unimaginable in the United States.

The last few elections added to the growing abyss.

The old Democratic Party of John F. Kennedy and Bill Clinton is now trending into a radical democratic socialist party. Meanwhile, the old Republican Party is mostly gone, replaced by Tea Party movements and the new Donald Trump base.

Former President Barack Obama came into office from Congress with the most left-wing voting record in the Senate. Trump was elected as the first president without either prior military or political experience.

Obama issued dozens of controversial "pen and phone" executive orders, bypassing Congress. And Trump is systematically overturning them - doing so with similar executive orders.

Will America keep dividing and soon resort to open violence, as happened in 1861? Or will Americans reunite and binc up our wounds, as we did following the upheavals of the 1930s Great Depression or after the protests of the 1960s?

The answer lies within each of us.

Every day we will either treat each other as fellow Americans, with far more uniting than dividing us, or we will continue on the present path that eventually ends in something like a hate-filled Iraq, Rwanda or the Balkans.

Victor Davis Hanson is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University and the author of the soon-to-be released *"The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won,"* (Basic Books, October 2018).

Trump Mocks Kavanaugh Accuser Christine Blasey Ford

Josh Dawsey; Felicia Sonmez, *The Washington Post* (DC), October 2, 2018

- SOUTHAVEN, Miss. — President Trump mocked the account of a woman who accused Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh of assault and told a Mississippi crowd that the #MeToo movement was unfairly hurting men.
- 5 Trump, in a riff that has been dreaded by White House and Senate aides, attacked the story of Christine Blasey Ford at length — drawing laughs from the crowd. The remarks were his strongest attacks yet of her testimony. "I don't know. I don't know." "Upstairs? Downstairs? Where was it?" "I don't know. But I had one beer. That's the only thing I remember," Trump said of Ford, as he impersonated her on stage. "I don't remember," he said repeatedly, apparently mocking her testimony.
- 10 Ford has said the incident happened in an upstairs room and that she is "100 percent" certain it was Kavanaugh who assaulted her, although she has acknowledged that her memories of other details of the evening remain unclear. Trump then told the crowd that men were going to be fired from their jobs after being unfairly accused of sexual harassment. Trump himself has been accused of harassment by many women and has been caught on tape bragging about grabbing women.
- 15 "Think of your husbands. Think of your sons," Trump told the crowd. He said that Kavanaugh's life was "in tatters" and urged the crowd to think about his family. And in an apparent swipe at all of Kavanaugh's accusers, he declared: "These are really evil people." In a tweet after the rally, Michael Bromwich, an attorney for Ford, called Trump's remarks "a vicious, vile and soulless attack" on his client.
- 20 "Is it any wonder that she was terrified to come forward, and that other sexual assault survivors are as well? She is a remarkable profile in courage. He is a profile in cowardice," Bromwich said. Trump made the remarks at a freewheeling rally that comes as the FBI investigates allegations that the embattled Supreme Court nominee sexually assaulted female students while in high school and college. The remarks were Trump's most pointed yet on Ford's testimony, in which she told the Senate Judiciary Committee
- 25 last week that Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her decades ago when they were both teenagers. Kavanaugh has angrily denied the allegations. Trump had previously refrained from attacking Ford personally, although he sent a tweet last month in which he questioned why Ford or her parents had not "immediately" filed charges with local law enforcement after the alleged incident.
- 30 Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with the Kavanaugh drama, aides say, and sees it as key to the midterms. The president lavished praise on Kavanaugh at the rally, and the crowd responded with similar enthusiasm, breaking out into chants of, "We want Kavanaugh! We want Kavanaugh!" But Trump also seemed to distance himself from his own nominee, even as he told the crowd he needed their support to get him through.
- 35 "I don't even know him. I met him for the first time a few weeks ago. It's not like I want to protect my friend," Trump said. Speaking for more than an hour, Trump touched on several of his favorite topics including his new trade deal with Canada and Mexico, the crowd size at his events and the state of the economy. He also mocked Democrats as acting "holier than thou" and focused on several potential 2020 contenders by name,
- 40 including former Vice President Joe Biden, Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). At one point, he also appeared to suggest that one Senate Democrat drinks too much, offering no proof for his attacks but urging the crowd to Google the senator's name. Trump was visiting Mississippi to rally support for Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith (R) ahead of the November election. Hyde-Smith, the state's first female senator, was appointed to succeed longtime Sen. Thad Cochran (R), who
- 45 resigned from the Senate in April amid health concerns. She faces three opponents in the nonpartisan special election for the remaining two years of Cochran's term: Republican Chris McDaniel and Democrats Mike Espy and Tobey Barte. Espy, if elected, would become the first black senator to represent Mississippi since shortly after the Civil War. Trump threw his support behind Hyde-Smith in August, declaring in a tweet that she had helped him "put America
- 50 First!" If no candidate earns more than 50 percent of the vote on Nov. 6, the top two vote-getters will advance to a runoff on Nov. 27. The rally was Trump's second of four this week, part of a final campaign push with a little over one month to go until the midterms. He heads to Minnesota on Thursday and Kansas on Saturday. Earlier Tuesday night, the New York Times published a bombshell report detailing how Trump received hundreds of
- 55 millions of dollars from his father's real estate empire, undercutting the image Trump has long crafted of himself as a self-made man. Much of the money was funneled by Fred Trump to his children through the use of shell companies and other schemes that allowed him to avoid paying taxes on it, the Times reported. Trump made no mention of the story during the rally. (...)

Architect of GOP Gerrymandering Was Behind Trump's Census Citizenship Question

The GOP's longtime redistricting expert said the question would be "advantageous to Republicans and Non-Hispanic Whites."

Ari Berman, *Motherjones.com*, May 30, 2019

5 The Trump administration's controversial effort to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census was drawn up by the Republican Party's gerrymandering mastermind, who wrote that it "would clearly be a disadvantage to the Democrats" and "advantageous to Republicans and Non-Hispanic Whites." This bombshell news, revealed in newly released legal documents, suggests that the Trump administration added the question not to better enforce the Voting Rights Act, as it claimed, but to benefit Republicans politically

10 when it came to drawing new political districts.

A case challenging the citizenship question is currently before the Supreme Court, and the new evidence significantly undercuts the Trump administration's position in the case.

Tom Hofeller, who passed away last year, was the longtime redistricting expert for the Republican National Committee. He helped Republicans draw heavily gerrymandered maps in nearly every key swing state after

15 the 2010 election. In some of those places, like North Carolina, the new lines were struck down for discriminating against African Americans.

In 2015, Hofeller was hired by the *Washington Free Beacon*, a conservative news outlet, to study the impact of drawing state legislative districts based on citizenship rather than total population, which has been the standard for decades. Hofeller's analysis of Texas state legislative districts found that drawing districts

20 based on citizenship—a move he conceded would be a "radical departure from the federal 'one person, one vote' rule presently used in the United States"—would reduce representation for Hispanics, who tended to vote Democratic, and increase representation for white Republicans. But Hofeller said that a question about citizenship would need to be added to the census, which forms the basis for redistricting, for states like Texas to pursue this new strategy.

25 Hofeller then urged President Donald Trump's transition team to add the question about citizenship to the 2020 census. He urged the team to claim that a citizenship question was needed to enforce the Voting Rights Act, even though Hofeller had already concluded that it would harm the racial minority groups that the act was designed to protect. That argument was then used by the Justice Department in a December 2017 letter requesting that the Commerce Department, which oversees the census, include a citizenship question.

30 Hofeller's documents were discovered on hard drives found by his estranged daughter and introduced into evidence in a separate trial challenging gerrymandered North Carolina state legislative districts drawn by Hofeller. On Thursday, lawyers challenging the citizenship question cited them in federal court. They suggest that members of Trump's team may not have been fully forthcoming in their testimony under oath. Neither Trump transition team member Mark Neuman nor John Gore, the former assistant attorney general

35 for civil rights who wrote the Justice Department letter, mentioned Hofeller's involvement in the letter when they were deposed under oath as part of a lawsuit by New York and 17 other states challenging the citizenship question.

Hofeller has long been involved in efforts to use the census to benefit the Republican Party. In the 1990s, he led the GOP's campaign to oppose using statistical sampling to better count minority populations whom the

40 Census Bureau tended to miss, writing that "a census that uses sampling and statistical adjustment will be the biggest victory for big government liberalism since the enactment of the Great Society." Though the bureau favored using sampling, the Supreme Court disallowed it after Republicans sued. More recently, one of Hofeller's protégés, Thomas Brunnel, was under consideration to be named deputy director of the Census Bureau under Trump, but he withdrew after his work on Republican redistricting cases attracted scrutiny.

45 The census determines how \$880 billion in federal funding is allocated, how much representation states receive, and how political districts are drawn. A citizenship question is expected to deter many immigrants and Latinos from responding to the census. That—especially if combined with an effort to exclude noncitizens from being counted in redistricting—would result in a huge transfer of economic and political power to whiter and more Republican areas.

50 Anti-immigration hardliners also lobbied hard for the Trump administration to add the citizenship question. In July 2017, former Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach wrote to Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross "at the direction of Steve Bannon" and said it was "essential" that the citizenship question be added to the 2020 census. Kobach told Ross that the absence of a citizenship question "leads to the problem that aliens who do not actually 'reside' in the United States are still counted for congressional apportionment purposes."

55 The Supreme Court is expected to rule on the census case by late June.

The Conversation, Aug. 24, 2018

Tearing down Confederate statues leaves structural racism intact

When protesters tore down the “Silent Sam” Confederate statue at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill on Aug. 20, it wasn’t just destruction of state property - a crime for which the protesters are now being investigated. Rather, the protesters knocked a powerful symbol of white supremacy from its pedestal - both literally and figuratively. Silent Sam, after all, was meant to pay tribute to those who wanted to maintain slavery. With the backing of the state, Silent Sam has stood proudly and defiantly at UNC Chapel Hill since 1913. Now the statue has become one of many in dozens of cities and municipalities where monuments of Confederate soldiers and generals have been removed – mostly with official sanction. But what, if anything, will this latest removal of a Confederate statue accomplish?

While the removal of Silent Sam was a joyous moment for protesters who had long requested that the university acknowledge that the statue was a divisive symbol of white supremacy – for the opposing side, it was an example of what they call the intolerance of the left, particularly among those who oppose the views and policies of President Trump.

Slavery at root of divide

This divide has deep historical roots. Silent Sam and the other 700-plus Confederate statues still standing in the U.S. represent a legacy of slavery and the structural racism that followed. My book, “The Weeping Time: Memory and the Largest Slave Auction in American History,” documented one important aspect of antebellum slavery. The harsh and devastating reality of slave auctions meant that profit mattered more than people. My book is one of many new books that seek to remind a forgetful public of America’s original sin. Beginning first in Virginia in 1662, with the other colonies and states following suit, officials enacted laws to specify that slave status followed the condition of the mother. This continued right up to the eve of the Civil War in 1861 where the enslaved were still bought and sold on the open market. And so, until the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, to be black in America was synonymous with a separate and unequal status. The American Civil War was fought to settle the question as to whether blacks should continue to be separate and unequal or whether the United States of America would finally be united – united in its commitment to the notion of justice and equality put forth in the Declaration of the Independence.

The simple fact is that the North won the war, and in winning it, the North preserved the union. The Confederate statues, therefore, represent a step backwards – a symbol of what the United States once was – not what it is now.

Averting a civil war over statues

Today, the nation is experiencing what some call a civil war over statues. The only way to avert this new civil war – in some ways a symbolic one over the outcome of the original Civil War - is to have dialogue. And after dialogue, actions must follow. It could be that protesters who toppled Silent Sam acted out of a sense that dialogue had reached a standstill after years of debate. Communities may decide to take the statues down or replace them with monuments that honor abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, William H. Seward or Thaddeus Stephens. They may also choose to keep the Confederate statues intact with a plaque that gives a more balanced view of the causes of the war. In this way, they would be used as a tool to teach about the Civil War – one of the bloodiest chapters in American history and one that none of us should want to repeat. Tearing down Confederate statues may actually do little to further the goal of ending the legacy of slavery. It will not bring about systemic change or end notions of white supremacy or eradicate structural racism. The more difficult work when it comes to dismantling the legacy of slavery involves ending some of slavery’s byproducts, such as mass incarceration of black and brown bodies and systemic educational inequities for children of color. The hope is that those protesters will channel their zeal and apply it to these thorny and persistent problems. There is no easy fix. But if and when that fix does come, 100 years from now, America will be remembered not only for its technological advances – such as its computers, its robots or its driverless cars - but for its commitment to human rights.

Anne C. Bailey

Professor of History, Binghamton University, State University of New York

Dictators praised and democracies condemned — welcome to the strange world of the United Nations

By Ross Clark, 23rd May 2019, *The Sun*

5 I CAN think of plenty of countries where the United Nations' investigator on Extreme Poverty could usefully spend his time. There is Venezuela, for example which, thanks to socialist misgovernment, has descended from being the world's 20th-richest country in 1970 to an economic basketcase where three quarters of the population are suffering from malnutrition. The UN has in recent years made a habit of knocking Britain. Now their investigator on Extreme Poverty, Professor Alston, claims that Britain is forcing its citizens to live in 'Dickensian' conditions. On the strength of a ten-day visit he has just published a report claiming that
10 Government policies have reduced 14million people — nearly a quarter of the population — to living in poverty. Of those, claims Professor Alston, 1.5million are living in "destitution". "The bottom line," he writes, is that "much of the glue that has held British society together since the Second World War has been deliberately removed and replaced with a harsh and uncaring ethos". The UN has in recent years made a habit of knocking Britain. Professor Alston wrote a similar report saying much the same thing just last November.
15 A year ago, it was the turn of the UN's absurdly named Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms Of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to put the boot into Britain, claiming that Brexit had sparked "explicit racial, ethnic and religious intolerance". Those were the words of Professor Tendayi Achiume, a Zambian who teaches law at the University of California at Los Angeles. If she wants to witness some racial tension she could, of course, just poke her nose out of her faculty window and observe
20 what is going on in the US, where last year police shot dead 1,000 people — with black people twice as likely to be killed as white people. Yet it is always Britain which is singled out for condemnation. It is a disgraceful way for the UN to treat its fifth-biggest contributor. This year, Britain will pay £110million into the UN's - coffers — 4.5 per cent of its total budget, in spite of Britain having less than one per cent of the world's population. By contrast, the UN has developed a habit of pouring praise on the governments of some of the
25 world's most wretched countries. While Venezuela has descended into the mire, UN figures have held it up as a shining example. In 2010, the President of the UN General Assembly said: "What Venezuela has achieved with regards to the Millennium Development Goals should serve as a model for all other countries." Then last week, delegates at the UN Human Rights Council inexplicably poured praise on North Korea — yes, Kim Jong-un's North Korea with its public executions and forced-labour camps. The UN has become a strange
30 world of inverted values where dictators are held up as heroes while democracies such as Britain are condemned. This perhaps has something to do with the fact many of the 197 states recognised by the UN are themselves lousily governed. Around 50 are outright dictatorships and another 50 have elements of dictatorship. UN officials love giving a poke in the eye to Britain — which was once, of course, colonial master to many of these countries. But there is another reason why Britain tends to show up badly in UN reports. It is easy for their special rapporteurs to pick through data on Britain because we are scrupulous about
35 keeping it. When, for example, Professor Alston claims Britain has 14million people living in "poverty", he is quoting an experimental measure of financial wellbeing developed by the Government only last year — and including things such as childcare costs, which have never previously been taken into account. Similarly, the claim about 1.5million people in "destitution" comes from a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation measuring the number of people who find themselves temporarily unable to meet bills for their basic needs. It is hardly to be compared with genuine destitution, where people suffer permanent hunger, lack of shelter and fresh water. True, there are many people in Britain who struggle financially — but official poverty figures are relative. We define as poor anyone who has a household income below 60 per cent of the "median" household income. By way of example, in 2014–15 median household income in the UK was £473 per week before
40 housing costs while "mean" — or typical — household income was £581. Yet many people who qualify as "poor" in Britain would be considered very well off in many parts of the world, where incomes are generally much lower.
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Why Can't U.K. Solve the Irish Border Problem in Brexit?

Stephen Castle, *The New York Times*, Feb. 28, 2018

5 The European Union proposed on Wednesday that, unless other solutions are found, Northern Ireland will remain in a customs union with the European Union and, for all intents and purposes, the single market as well, when Britain leaves the bloc. The purpose, as outlined in a draft document, is to ensure that there will be no “hard border” between Ireland and Northern Ireland after the British withdrawal, known as Brexit. That drew a rebuke from Prime Minister Theresa May, who rejected the idea out of hand. Here is a guide to why this issue is seemingly so intractable, and how it might
10 be settled or otherwise dealt with.

The 500-kilometer border between Ireland, which will remain in the European Union, and Northern Ireland, which as part of the United Kingdom will be leaving the bloc, is probably the toughest challenge in talks over Britain's departure. The frontier issue is so tricky because, under the Northern Irish peace process, the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland has melted away, with checkpoints dismantled to reduce sectarian tensions. The return of a “hard” border might threaten to
15 undermine the Good Friday agreement that has reduced sectarian conflict in the North. And that is exactly what some fear Brexit will do, unless Britain remains part of the European Union's single market and a customs union — an option that Mrs. May ruled out at the beginning of the withdrawal process. In December, a last-ditch agreement over the Irish border was reached between Mrs. May and the European Union. That was greeted with widespread relief, yet it did not really settle the matter, setting the stage for Wednesday's action by the European Union.

Its executive, the European Commission, published a draft withdrawal agreement that includes a fallback plan for retaining the soft Irish border. European officials say they are putting into legal language a document, agreed to by Britain in December, that laid out three options. Britain's
25 preferred one is for an overall Brexit trade agreement that would solve the problem, but talks on that have not even formally begun. The second was for Britain to propose “specific solutions” such as the use of technology to avoid a hard border. No detailed plans have been put forward, and many are so skeptical of this idea that critics call it the “Narnia solution.” Hence the fallback option, now written into the draft protocol, of “maintaining full alignment with those rules of the Union's internal market and the customs union” that support cooperation with Ireland as laid out under the 1998 Belfast, or
30 Good Friday, agreement.

Speaking in Parliament, Mrs. May described the proposals as a threat to her country's “constitutional integrity,” while one of her former ministers, David Jones, told the BBC that the European Union was using the Brexit talks to try to “annex” Northern Ireland. They worry that if Northern Ireland
35 stays largely within the European Union's customs union and single market while mainland Britain quits them, a new economic frontier will be created down the middle of the Irish Sea. That would be a problem for any London government, because a majority of people in Northern Ireland want to stay in the United Kingdom, but it is particularly poisonous for Mrs. May. That is because her minority government depends on the support of Northern Ireland's hard-line Democratic Unionist Party, for which keeping its place in the United Kingdom is an existential matter. [...]

Britain could also somehow devise those elusive plans for technological solutions for the frontier, though there is no convincing example anywhere in the world. Britain's foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, made matters worse on Tuesday by comparing the Irish border to that between two London boroughs where a congestion charging scheme operates. (Then, a leaked letter he wrote seemed to
45 acknowledge that a hard border might arise in Northern Ireland.) Mrs. May's other option is to play hardball and hope that the national leaders of the European Union retreat from the position proposed on Wednesday, at least allowing this issue to be fudged a little longer.

Jacob Rees-Mogg criticised as 'morally repellent' for defending Victorian colonialist General Napier in widely panned book.

'You're talking about the British empire spreading civilization which is repellent, morally repellent'

Albert Evans, INews Britain's most trusted digital news brand, Wednesday May 22nd 2019

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This was the moment Jacob Rees-Mogg was told that his defence of Victorian colonialism was 'morally repellent' by one of his book's harshest critics as the pair clashed in a radio interview. The Conservative MP for North-Somerset's book *The Victorians* has been largely pilloried by critics for its take on a series of historical figures that defined the era. Mr Rees-Mogg mentioned the criticism at the start of the interview on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme, saying: "The only thing that's been worse reviewed than my book is Mrs May's speech last night." Historian A.N Wilson, who described the book as "staggering silly" in a Times review, told him: "Well, I mean, this isn't really a history book. This is a political manifesto and Mogg the author of the book is sitting beside me, is a very admirable man in many respects, sees the Victorians and sort of foreshadowing of himself basically." The Brexiteer politician said his book was looking at "interesting parallels" with the present day but then took issue with some of the points made in the historian's review. Referring to British General Sir Charles James Napier, who conquered the province of Sindh, in modern day Pakistan, he said: "Mr Wilson mentions Napier in his review and accuses Napier of massacres. This is simply not true. "Napier is a very interesting figure who is against the policy of destroying villages and tries to stop it. He stops infanticide or tries to reach it out. He's against the practice of burning widows. He also, and this is very unusual in the society in which he's dealing, is a great defender of the rights of women. He is very opposed to the practice that goes on in Sindh of husbands being allowed to kill their wives and get away with it. He stops that and he actually hangs people who murder their wives to the great shock of the people in Sindh. Now, that's not to say that he is the best imperial administrator ever, but he is a very upright and proper and well-intentioned man." But the historian took issue with Mr Rees-Mogg's characterisation of the colonialist saying: "Before he went to India, Napier said the only reason people went out to work for the East Indian company was to make money it had nothing to do with spreading civilization as you said in your book." "By the time he got there he'd been corrupted," Mr Wilson said before adding: "I'm sorry he massacred thousands in the Punjab and he then stole the Kohinoor (diamond), which you say was given, but it wasn't given to Queen Victoria it was stolen." While Mr Rees-Mogg argued that these claims were "not true" the historian added that Queen Victoria had been ashamed to wear the diamond, thought to be the world's largest, that is still held by the British crown to this day. He said: "She was so ashamed of what Napier and friends did and later which you don't mention the appalling Nazi-style tortures which the British did in the late 1850s in reprisal of what they told him was the impertinence of the Indian mutiny." But Rees-Mogg countered that the British general had refused to obey order to carry out punitive attacks on villages that refused to pay taxes, claiming: "Napier values in Indian life as much as a British life and this is one of the great things about him." When the Tory MP claimed that Mr Napier had been on the "side of humanity" the historian hit back that "he was on the side of white humanity." The historian then detailed the atrocities carried out in what was then British India by the colonial forces but the MP said that this did not apply to his subject. "You're talking about the British empire spreading civilization which is repellent, morally repellent." He then read out a section of his book that said, "Sindh was now British territory" and then asked: "by what standards is military invasion of somebody else's land justifiable?" He responded that: "Napier was thinking of how Sindh was ruled before and how rapacious the rulers of Sindh were, how the people of Sindh was starving, and that Napier improve their condition, and as I was saying, he believed that the rule of law should apply In Sindh as it did in London and now."

CNN

2020 Democrats are trying to redefine the idea of reparations

Analysis by Zachary B. Wolf, February 26, 2019

5 The issue of reparations -- usually interpreted as making financial amends to African-Americans for centuries of slavery, racism and inequality -- has again entered the political conversation after several Democratic presidential candidates expressed support for the idea.

Sen. Kamala Harris of California recently told a radio show host that the idea of reparations should be considered in the face of economic inequality. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has spoken

10 approvingly of the need for reparations, potentially for Native Americans whose land was expropriated by European settlers as well as for African-Americans. And so has former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro.

The idea, which the writer Ta-Nehisi Coates tried to reintroduce in 2014 with his manifesto "The Case for Reparations," has traveled into the mainstream of political discourse once again. But none of the

15 candidates who have expressed openness to the concept has a concrete proposal that would specifically give a new benefit to any group of Americans based on their race.

Asked by a young black woman at a CNN town hall Monday night for his position on reparations, Sen. Bernie Sanders did not say he did or did not support them, but rather argued that inequality must be

20 addressed. When pushed by Wolf Blitzer specifically on the idea of reparations, the Vermont independent, who is running for the Democratic presidential nomination, responded by pointing out that the term "reparations" is being used all kinds of ways.

"What does that mean?" Sanders asked of the word. "What do they mean? I'm not sure that anyone is very clear. What I've just said is that I think we need to do everything we can to address the massive

25 level of disparity that exists in this country."

Sanders has had no problem in his political career making bold promises that seem at odds with the political reality. Monday night he was boldly promising "Medicare-for-all," a \$15 minimum wage and free college. Reparations, interestingly, is where he stopped short.

Harris, along with New Jersey's Sen. Cory Booker, is among the group of Democrats of color running for

30 President. First on "The Breakfast Club" radio show and in a subsequent interview with The Grio, a news website geared toward African-Americans, Harris repeated that the US has to acknowledge that, generally, black people and white people in this country do not start from the same place. But the solution she has pointed to is not one that would benefit only African-Americans.

"We had over 200 years of slavery," Harris told The Grio. "We had Jim Crow for almost a century. We had legalized discrimination, segregation and now we have segregation and discrimination that is not

35 legal but still exists and is a barrier to progress. We have disparities around housing. We have disparities around education. We have disparities around income. And we have to recognize that everybody did not start out on an equal footing in this country. And in particular black people have not."

Harris argued that her proposal to give new tax breaks to low- and middle-income people could help address this problem. The Grio interviewer Natasha Alford pointed out this could by default help black

40 families but "it is not a particular policy for African-Americans." Harris ended up saying this:

"Any policy that will benefit black people will benefit all of society. Let's be clear about that. Let's really be clear about that. So I'm not going to sit here and say I'm going to do something that's only going to

45 benefit black people. No. Because whatever benefits that black family will benefit that community and society as a whole and the country." Booker has proposed giving, essentially, nest eggs to American children each year so that by the time they are grown they will have tens of thousands of dollars to pay for college or make a down payment on a house.

So-called baby bonds are a policy aimed at addressing the lack of generational wealth that makes it harder for African-American children to succeed.

But, like Harris' tax breaks, baby bonds would not benefit only African-American children. Anyone whose

50 family makes under the income threshold of \$126,000 would benefit. It just so happens that would also help address racial inequality.

Booker has not recently weighed in on the idea of reparations, but his baby bonds have been pushed by William Darity, a Duke researcher who supports the idea of reparations but has argued that baby bonds could be a more realistic way to close the gap of racial inequality in this country.

55 That the Democratic electorate is increasingly reliant on minority voters has been documented chapter and verse by political watchers. Which tells you a lot about why Democrats in 2020 are paying lip service to the idea of reparations. But it's also not like there is a specific plan to push reparations. (...) The question is whether it is an idea that can be reinterpreted, as Democrats seem to be trying to do.

The New York Times

Opinion: Why Trump Will Lose in 2020

By Rachel Bitecofer, Jan. 24, 2019

Dr. Bitecofer is a professor of political science at Christopher Newport University.

5 With several major Democratic primary candidates having declared, the palace intrigue of America's 2020 presidential election is already in nearly full swing. But what if I were to tell you that, barring a significant unforeseen shock to the system, the outcome of 2020 is already set in stone? The high levels of hyperpartisanship and polarization in the electorate have profoundly affected the political behavior of Americans and, by extension, made the outcome of our elections highly predictable.

10 Always powerful, partisanship has become the be-all and end-all for American voters. With these political dynamics, a person accused of sexual misconduct against teenage girls and young women can run for and *win* upward of 90 percent of his party's vote — as the Republican Roy Moore did, according to exit polls, in the special Senate election in Alabama in 2017. Yet a key aspect of polarization has been somewhat overlooked: negative partisanship. Voters with this attitude are

15 mobilized not by love of their own party so much as by hatred of the opposition party. Negative partisanship especially benefits the party that doesn't hold the presidency, because out-party voters find themselves living in a world where their political preferences are under constant assault, or at least appear to be so. For the midterms, I devised a new forecasting model informed partly by this new paradigm of voter behavior. It was as accurate as the best in the forecasting business, and my

20 predictions were made months ahead of the others. That's important, because it is already telling us what we can expect from the 2020 election. For the 2018 midterms, my model predicted a large partisan surge for Democrats. I identified America's suburbs as ground zero for a political realignment away from Republican House candidates. The realignment was fueled by two things: One was conventional — the movement of disaffected independent, or swing, voters away from the president's

25 party, which has happened in every midterm election since 2006. The other can be tracked to the mobilization of negative partisanship in driving turnout from Democrats who usually sit out midterm elections. By identifying Republican-held districts with both a reasonably competitive partisan electorate and a large number of college-educated voters who could form a Democratic turnout swell, I predicted — in July 2018 — that negative partisanship would allow

30 Democrats to pick up 42 House seats and sweep "Reagan country" in Orange County, Calif. At first, my model was an outlier, but by Election Day, the FiveThirtyEight "classic" forecast, Sabato's Crystal Ball and the Cook Political Report all agreed with my forecast. Motivated by the threat posed by the Trump administration, casual Democratic voters, especially

35 college-educated women, have been activated since Mr. Trump's election and will remain activated so long as the threat he presents to them remains. And the complacent Democratic electorate of the 2010 and 2014 congressional midterms as well as the 2016 presidential election is gone (for now). It has been replaced by a galvanized Democratic electorate that will produce the same structural advantage for Democrats that manifested in the 2018 midterms.

40 The surge won't be uniform. Democrats will win big in more urban, more diverse, better-educated and more liberal-friendly states and will continue to lose ground in other states like Missouri. Although Mr. Trump may well win Ohio and perhaps even Florida again, it is not likely he will carry Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania in 2020. Look at the midterm performance of statewide Democrats in those states. And his troubles with swing voters, whom he won in 2016, will put Arizona, North Carolina and perhaps even Georgia in play for Democrats and effectively remove Virginia, Colorado, Nevada

45 and New Hampshire from the list of swing states. In short, the 2020 presidential election is shaping up as a battle of the bases, and the Democrats' base is simply bigger. When their demographic advantage combines with an enthusiasm advantage and heightened party loyalty fueled by negative partisanship, they hold a significant structural advantage. Turnout in 2018 was about 12 points higher than 2014 turnout and higher than any midterm in

50 decades. Midterm turnout can sometimes trail presidential-election-year turnout by 20 points. It was just 10 points in 2018, when it hit nearly 50 percent, versus 2016. It is not infeasible that turnout in 2020 will exceed 65 percent. Presidential-cycle electorates are better for Democrats than midterm electorates are, and the third-party share in 2018 was also at its lowest levels in decades. In

55 congressional midterms, the average third-party balloting rate in recent elections is about 3.5 percent; in 2018, it was just half that. We'll spend the next 21 months captivated by an election whose outcome may already be determined because of polarization and negative partisanship. Democrats have a clear path to recapturing the White House. It is hard to imagine any other president facing these conditions running for re-election. But needless to say, Mr. Trump isn't just any other president.

It's doing what novels did 100 years ago': how TV became a cultural force

Fiona Sturges, Sat 26 Jan 2019, *The Guardian*

The world may be crashing down around our ears but, as we wait out the apocalypse, one thing is clear: we will not be short of good telly. Subscription services are booming, budgets have

5 skyrocketed and, with more original shows on offer than ever, viewers need never leave the house again. While on-demand TV and box-set bingeing means we each create our own schedules, TV

10 dramas have nonetheless yielded genuine “watercooler” moments, albeit with the chatter happening on social media rather than at work. Will Bodyguard’s PC Budd ever crack a smile? Is it possible for Luther to open a door instead of kicking it in? We need answers, preferably from strangers on the

15 internet. So how on earth did we get here? “It’s the same story with TV as with everything else: the internet came along and provided access to more content,” says Piers Wenger, controller of BBC drama. “The age of digital platforms and on-demand content has led to a global market for English-

20 language television. But it’s in the last five or six years that it’s really started to pop, which means massive amounts of money coming into the UK drama sector. And the audiences are vast.” [...] Netflix opened the floodgates through its consumer-friendly approach, upping the ante by allowing

25 viewers to watch at their own pace and on whatever device they had to hand. Now, consumer demand has led to an era of feverish commissioning and eye-watering budgets across the networks. According to the Economist, Netflix splashed out \$13bn on content in 2018, with the majority going

30 on new commissions. While Wenger won’t be drawn on BBC drama’s financial outgoings, he says that budgets have increased sufficiently that “we can play in genres that we couldn’t have done justice to in the past”. All of which is great news for actors. “I’ve never been as busy as I am now,”

35 says Daniel Mays, star of Line of Duty, Born to Kill and the forthcoming Sky One drama Temple. “Now you can really take the audience on a journey. Temple will be eight episodes at an hour long each. It gives us an incredible platform and the range to dig deep. Plus, the crossover among actors

40 from film to TV is massive. When you’re working with actors of that calibre, it really raises your game.” Certainly, television is increasingly the place to be for Hollywood actors. In the era of “safe” cinema franchises, from Marvel and DC to Star Wars and Bourne, there is a sense that greater variety and experimentation can be found on TV. [...] While increased ambition and scale is understandably

45 seductive to writers and actors, what about the viewers? With a near-constant stream of new shows being flagged up, the choice can be overwhelming. And just because a show looks pretty and has set tongues wagging doesn’t mean it’s any good. “Starting something new definitely requires a level of commitment,” reflects Mays. “It can become this mountain to climb. We’re awash with content, so the worry is whether or not the production you’re working on can make an impact. It’s a fierce marketplace and the competition is stiff. Finding the audience seems to me to be the final hurdle.”

Clearly there are greater challenges ahead. While Netflix continues to pile on subscribers, the rate of growth has started to slow; a price increase was recently announced for US viewers. Meanwhile, Disney is soon to join the party with its own platform, Disney+; Apple’s streaming service is set to launch this year; while Amazon Prime Video is proving a worthy adversary with series such as Transparent, The Marvelous Mrs Maisel and an upcoming bank-busting Lord of the Rings series. If

greater competition means more content, does more content mean quantity over quality? Mays thinks not. “I haven’t seen a dumbing down of anything – at least not yet. Looking at new projects, you have to think about who is writing it and who is going to be involved. But I see the rising competition as a positive thing. It’s good for actors but I think television as a whole has been enriched.” This improved picture, however, does not extend to representation. Behind the scenes, TV

remains predominantly white and male, with a report last year stating that only 2.3% of it was made by directors from a BAME (black, Asian, minority ethnic) background. “It’s not enough to have more people in EastEnders and more people doing the weather,” Lenny Henry told the Press Association.

As Migrants Reach U.K. by Boat, Numbers Are Small but Worry Is Big

By Richard Pérez-Peña, Dec. 31, 2018, *The New York Times*

Day after day, news reports in Britain prominently feature migrants making the perilous trip across the English Channel in small boats, including a dozen who landed on Monday. Headlines and anti-immigration politicians call it a crisis, and the cabinet member in charge of migration policy has labeled it a “major incident” fueled by criminal gangs. The total number of people, primarily from Iran, who have made the journey and requested asylum since early November is only about 240, in a country that has averaged about 25,000 asylum applicants per year over the last decade. What is new is that they are regularly smuggled into Britain by boat — which used to be fairly rare — supplying jarring pictures of people being pulled from foundering little craft in rough seas, or being taken into custody on beaches. And it comes at a tense moment in the nation’s politics, as Prime Minister Theresa May tries to arrange a divorce from the European Union — a process, known as Brexit, that has largely been driven by anxiety over immigration — while fending off calls from Brexit opponents for a second referendum on the matter. “This is primarily about a political problem in the U.K., rather than an actual migration problem,” aside from the serious risk to the people in boats, said Robert McNeil, the deputy director of the Migration Observatory at the University of Oxford. “Numerically, this is a blip,” he said. “Certainly you cannot say that 200 people arriving over a two-month period by clandestine means is a crisis, or is even unusual.” Migrants have long crossed the Channel from France unauthorized, but their main tactic kept them out of the public eye: they hid inside trucks that went onto ferries or trains. That has become much harder in the last two years as the British authorities have intensified vehicle checks. “The only other option left to the people in the area hoping to get into Britain is crossing by boat,” said Nando Sigona, who teaches about international migration at the University of Birmingham and has written extensively on the topic. The BBC reported in November that smugglers were telling migrants in France that it would be much harder to get into Britain after Brexit, which is scheduled to take effect on March 29. Immigration experts say there is little evidence for that claim. The home secretary, Sajid Javid, who oversees migration policy, cut short a South African vacation because of the flurry of boats. In an opinion column in *The Daily Telegraph* on Monday, he noted the deadly risks in crossing by boat, and listed steps he and the French authorities were taking to address the problem. “Organized crime gangs are targeting and profiteering from these vulnerable and often desperate people,” Mr. Javid wrote. But critics on the left suggested that Mrs. May’s Conservative government and sympathetic newspapers were exaggerating the problem to win backing for a Brexit agreement that she seems unable to get through Parliament. They note that during the Brexit campaign in 2016, the measure’s backers stoked fears of Europe’s migration crisis to generate support. “I think for the government, the appearance of a migration crisis is very convenient at the moment,” Mr. Sigona said. A main reason 52 percent of British voters endorsed Brexit in June 2016 was to retake control of immigration policy from Brussels and limit the number of people entering the country. Millions of foreigners live in Britain, most of them legally, and most from other European Union countries. Hundreds of thousands of others live in the country illegally, but most of those are people who have overstayed student, work or tourist visas. In 2015 and 2016, more than a million people flooded into Europe, the largest number fleeing the war in Syria. Yet relatively few made their way to Britain. Similarly, the number now crossing the Channel may not be large, but it has outsized psychological and political resonance, Mr. McNeil said. “The sheer spectacle of people arriving on boats evokes this larger concept of a migrant crisis, after all the images we’ve seen from the Mediterranean,” he said. “It also strikes at something fundamentally British, which is this idea that Britain is defended by its sea borders.”

The American Prospect, MAY 30, 2019

Voter Registration Is Surging—So Republicans Want to Criminalize It

ELIZA NEWLIN CARNEY

Turnout by voters of color went up by double digits in Tennessee and other states last year, prompting a spate of GOP bills designed to shut down voter registration drives.

The new face of voter suppression is also the oldest Jim Crow tactic on the books: Block voters from getting on the rolls to begin with. In the wake of a midterm that saw surging turnout by non-white, young, and urban voters—all blocs that tend to favor Democrats—a backlash in GOP state legislatures was perhaps inevitable. What troubles voting rights advocates is that Republicans have now set out to penalize not just voters but the groups trying to register them, in some cases with astronomical fines and jail time that effectively criminalize civic engagement.

The most extreme example is a law newly enacted in Tennessee that imposes civil and criminal penalties, including fines of up to \$10,000 or more and close to a year in jail, on organizers who submit incomplete registration forms, fail to participate in state-mandated trainings, or fail to submit forms within a ten-day window. The law violates both the First and the 14th Amendments, say civil rights advocates who have filed suit, and also runs afoul of the National Voter Registration Act.

“This seems like a new frontier, a concerning frontier, and one that should be nipped in the bud by the federal courts,” says Danielle Lang, co-director of the Campaign Legal Center’s voting rights and redistricting program. “Because this is the First Amendment at its core.”

(...) The new law’s critics say that explains why Republicans are so eager to crack down on voter registration groups. The law’s GOP authors argue that thousands of ineligible voters were erroneously registered, and that the new restrictions are needed to combat fraud. A *Washington Post* analysis found that the flood of registrations overwhelmed and imposed costs on state officials, but uncovered scant evidence of fraud. The real problem with the voter registration drive, say civil rights groups, is that it was too successful.

“People came out in large numbers in 2018, not just in Tennessee but across the nation,” says Charlane Oliver, co-founder and president of the Equity Alliance, which promotes civic engagement by communities of color. “Now you are seeing a push to find more creative ways to keep people from the ballot box.”

Indeed, some of the biggest spikes in voter turnout among voters of color last year were in the very same states that have sought, like Tennessee, to shut down massive voter registration drives. Non-white voter turnout jumped close to 16 points in Arizona, 15 points in Georgia, and 12 points in Texas, Census Bureau data show. All three states have, like Tennessee, advanced bills or policies that in one way or another make it harder for voters to get on the rolls.

The Arizona House this year passed a bill that makes it a misdemeanor, punishable by a \$2,500 fine and six months in jail, to pay someone based on the number of voters they register. (Political parties are exempted.) Anyone who misses a ten-day deadline for submitting registration forms to the state would face four months in jail. The Arizona Senate failed to act on the bill before the end of the legislative session.

Last year, Georgia’s “no match, no vote” rules sought to keep voters off the rolls based on typographical errors, but that provision was blocked in court. More recently, the head of the state’s ethics commission launched a broad probe that targets several groups that mobilized voters on behalf of Democrat Stacey Abrams, who narrowly lost last year’s gubernatorial race to Republican Brian Kemp.

Texas considered but did not pass a sweeping voter restriction bill that, among other provisions, threatened jail time for voters who made inadvertent errors filling out their registration forms. Texas already has some of the most severe limits on voter registration in the nation, including elaborate training, data entry and citizenship requirements, and criminal penalties for violators.

A better answer to fraud concerns, say voting rights advocates, is automatic voter registration, which places voters immediately on the rolls when they interact with government agencies, and which has taken effect in more than a dozen states. The threat of steep fines and jail time will make registering voters simply too risky for most of the low-budget civic groups engaged in that work. But as with the poll taxes and literacy tests that once blocked African Americans from the rolls, that appears to be the point.

“These tactics aren’t new,” says Oliver, of the Equity Alliance. “They just look a little different. Same old tricks.”

The Nation

Will North Dakota's Discriminatory Voter-ID Law Cost Democrats the Senate?

By John Nichols, Oct. 15, 2018

5 The difference between Democratic versus Republican control of the US Senate could come down to a few thousand votes in North Dakota. And the Supreme Court just put its thumb on Mitch McConnell's side of the scale. The high court ruled late last week in favor of a widely criticized North Dakota voter-identification law that requires eligible voters to present an ID that includes a residential address in order to cast a ballot. Because Native Americans in the state often have IDs that list post-office boxes—rather than street addresses—Jacqueline De León, an attorney with the
10 Native American Rights Fund, warns that “North Dakota Native American voters will now have to vote under a system that unfairly burdens them more than other voters.” Standing Rock Sioux tribal chairman Mike Faith is blunter in his assessment: “Native Americans can live on the reservation without an address. They're living in accordance with the law and treaties, but now all of a sudden they can't vote. This law clearly discriminates against Native Americans in North
15 Dakota.” That discrimination is a big deal for Native Americans, whose voting rights have too frequently been undermined and assaulted. It is, as well, a big deal for the politics of North Dakota and the nation. North Dakota is a state where Native Americans make up 5.5 percent of the population, where Native Americans have tended to a history of giving overwhelming support to Democrats (over 80 percent in key counties in key elections) and where Democratic US Senator
20 Heidi Heitkamp is now running a hard race to retain a seat to which she was elected in 2012 by fewer than 3,000 votes (50.2 percent for the Democrat to 49.3 percent for her Republican rival). Those numbers point to the very real prospect that the discrimination the high court has permitted could disrupt grassroots democracy on November 6. And it won't stop there. In this contentious year, disruption in one state has the potential to disrupt the battle for control of Congress.
25 Heitkamp is generally seen as the most endangered Democratic incumbent of 2018, especially since she opposed the nomination of Donald Trump's nominee for the Supreme Court, Brett Kavanaugh, in a state that in 2016 backed Trump with a 63-27 landslide. But the Democrat, an able campaigner with deep roots in North Dakota, is still holding her own. She trails Republican Kevin Cramer, but her numbers are far better than those posted by Hillary Clinton in the state two
30 years ago—and Heitkamp has a history of outperforming her poll numbers, finishing strong and winning narrowly on Election Day. (A number of polls and predictions pegged the senator as a likely loser going into the 2012 election that she won by 0.9 percent of the vote.)
Republicans at the state and national levels know this. The restrictive voter-ID law, which targets a key block of potential Heitkamp voters, was proposed shortly after the Democrat won in 2012. It is
35 entirely reasonable to suggest that the disenfranchisement of thousands of Native American voters could tip the balance this year against Heitkamp. That's a doubly unsettling prospect because, as an analysis of the court's decision for the American Civil Liberties Union notes, “In an election that may wind up being decided by just a few thousand votes, the court's decision could be deeply consequential for the country, not just [for] those who live in North Dakota.” No one knows what
40 will happen between now and November 6. But the Supreme Court's wrongheaded ruling creates the possibility, in this age of political turbulence, wave elections, and unexpected mobilizations, that Democrats could come to the verge of taking the Senate—only to see their prospects doomed by a narrow loss in North Dakota.
(...) Democratic candidates are mounting serious bids to flip red and purple states such as
45 Arizona, Nevada, Tennessee, and Texas. It's still a long shot, but it is possible that Democrats and independents who align with the party could win 51 seats. If Democrats win only 50 seats, however, Vice President Mike Pence will tip the balance in McConnell's favor. Given the majority leader's penchant for turning the chamber into a rubber stamp from President Trump's policies and nominees, that would be a dismal result in a year that might otherwise see significant Democratic
50 gains. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe has announced that it will dispatch drivers to get voters to the polls and help them clear the hurdles. But the tribe warns that there is still a threat that voting will be hindered, that turnout will be undermined, and that North Dakota's law—and the Court's decision to uphold it—“will cause irreparable harm to the people of Standing Rock.” With all of this in mind, tribal chairman Mike Faith has a question that all Americans should be asking themselves:
55 “Why is it getting harder and harder for Native Americans to vote?”

Joe Anderson: Fox Street Village debacle reveals the blood-chilling consequences of Tory law changes

Mayor of Liverpool writes about the 'profit before people' approach that has put lives at risk in Liverpool and beyond

5 Liam Thorp, 4 MAY 2019, *Echo*

Liverpool has been hit by another development scandal - with hundreds of innocent students being forced to move out of the Fox Street Village development in Everton. Writing in the ECHO today, Mayor of Liverpool Joe Anderson argues that the problems at Fox Street - along with many other developments - are borne out of a law change brought in by the Coalition government, which allows developers to appoint their own inspectors to sign off buildings as ready to be lived in. If there's one lesson from the Grenfell disaster that should never be forgotten it is this: public safety is paramount. It's a sad indictment on modern Britain that it took Grenfell to highlight this and at the same time expose the fatal consequences of that Thatcherite ideology of "profit before people". This ideology has a twin, that "private sector knows best", which has acted like a cancer on society, making orphans of responsibility and accountability. There are so many examples of this legacy. In fact, I can give you a very recent one that chills the blood. The example is the Fox Street development in Everton. A development so poor in its construction that the council and fire service took the unprecedented step of slapping a prohibition order on it has required an entire block to be emptied of residents until repair works are undertaken. This block is deemed so dangerous that - as of this week - it cannot be occupied. Serious question marks remain over two other blocks, which may soon be in the same position. The build is brand new. It was completed within the past two years, but its flaws are so great it is deemed by fire authority experts to be a risk to life. Basically a fire could spread rapidly in the same way it did at Grenfell. [...] When the Tory-led coalition came to power, they didn't just rip up our Building Schools for the Future programme, enforce austerity and introduce the bedroom tax. In October 2010 they also introduced a small change to the construction regulations that went largely unnoticed by the wider world. Namely, they opened the floodgates so that private companies could bid against councils to inspect construction work. This applies to the construction of not only domestic works such as your house extensions, but also refurbishments, conversions of existing buildings as well as new high-rise blocks. Statutory inspections were scrapped, taking away the role of Local Authorities in inspections for major projects. So - when this block was finished, Fox Street Development Ltd appointed their own approved inspector. Who can report the approved inspector? Only the developer who appointed them! To add insult to injury, the Local Authority's Building Control team cannot intervene without a referral from the Approved Inspector themselves. This appalling state of affairs has already been highlighted by Dame Judith Hackitt following the Grenfell tragedy where changes to the system have been recommended in her report, but not acted upon by Government. In the meantime, almost 100 people are having to leave their home through no fault of their own. The city council has no legal duty of care for the tenants, but morally we have not stood idly by. In fact it is because this council take public safety so seriously that the Fox Street issue was discovered in the first place. Post-Grenfell, councils were asked to only inspect high rise buildings above 18m in height.

CNN

Trump has gained among black voters since the 2016 election

Analysis by Harry Enten, August 18, 2018

- 5 Poll of the week: A new Quinnipiac University poll finds that President Donald Trump's approval rating is 41%, with a disapproval rating of 54%. That's largely consistent with live-interview national polling taken the last few months. When you break it down by race, Trump's approval rating is 9% among black voters. His disapproval rating is 85% among them.
- 10 What's the point: There is another poll out in which more than 30% of black voters supposedly approve of Trump's job performance. Trump's biggest fans have trumpeted this poll as a sign that he is breaking through with African-Americans. The problem is the poll is almost certainly incorrect. Polls of higher quality such as Quinnipiac's -- probability-based polls that are transparent about their data -- have consistently found Trump's approval rating to be much lower. The President's approval rating in these polls completed since July has averaged 12% with African-Americans. His disapproval rating has
- 15 averaged 84%. Here's the thing though: It does actually seem that Trump has gained support among African-Americans since the 2016 election. The network exit polls had Trump winning only 8% among black voters in 2016. Hillary Clinton took 89% of their vote. That is, Clinton won black voters by an 81-percentage-point margin. Trump's average net approval rating (approval rating minus disapproval rating) with blacks right
- 20 now is -72 points. In other words, he's shrunk his deficit by 9 points. I would argue, though, that the President has made an even bigger improvement. To make an apples-to-apples comparison, we can look at a post-election Pew Research Center study with verified voters. Pew found that Clinton had an even larger margin 85-point margin with black voters, of 91% to 6%. If this study were correct, it would mean that Trump had doubled his black support since the election. (Note:
- 25 Trump's approval rating with blacks in a Pew poll in June, not included in our average, was 14%. Again, this suggests he has gained since the election.) Even with averaging, the African-American subsample in these polls is small enough that our current estimate of Trump's approval rating comes with a fairly wide margin of error. That's why I decided to look at the President's average approval rating since April in Gallup's tracking poll. Doing so gives us a total sample of about 2,500 black respondents, a fairly
- 30 robust sample size. In this Gallup data since April, Trump's approval rating has averaged 13%. His disapproval rating has averaged 84%. Both of which are slightly better for Trump than our average since July. What's interesting is that when you compare Trump's approval rating in Gallup polling with the percentage of the vote he got against Clinton in every other ethnic or racial group, Trump is doing worse now than he did back in 2016. Is it possible that these high-quality pollsters are simply missing black
- 35 respondents who dislike Trump? Sure. That, though, is a theory without any evidence that I know of. Could it be that some African-Americans are saying they approve of the President but they won't end up voting Republican in an election? Of course. Additionally, many black voters undecided on Trump may go with the Democrats in the end. That said, there doesn't seem to be any sign of that in polling from
- 40 Marist College, Quinnipiac, Pew or the The Washington Post. The Democratic margin on the generic congressional ballot with black voters isn't any greater in these polls than Trump's net approval rating among them would imply.
- It just seems that for whatever reason the President has picked up a small, but statistically significant, amount of support among African-Americans. The fact that he has done so while losing support among all other racial groups makes it that much more impressive.
- 45 It's not clear that this shift in sentiment will make much of a difference in 2018. Democrats still hold a sizable lead on the generic congressional ballot. A lead large enough that they should win control of the House, if everything holds through November.
- Still, the importance of even a slight shift in African-American voter sentiment shouldn't be underestimated. They make up greater than 10% of the US electorate, and more in key swing states like
- 50 Florida, Michigan and Virginia.
- If you were to apply the changes we see in Trump's approval rating among blacks compared with his vote share in 2016 and all other groups voted the same, it would mean a shift in the national margin of about 1 percentage point toward him. In these swing states mentioned, it could be even greater. One point may not seem like a lot, but remember that's half of Clinton's national margin in 2016. George W.
- 55 Bush was able to win 2004 in part because he made a small gain among black voters similar to that Trump seems to have made since his own election. If Trump is able to hold on to his additional African-American support, it could aid him in 2020.

Fox News - OPINION

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's 'Green New Deal' accidentally exposes the left's big lie

By Marc Thiessen, February 15, 2019

5 Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's now infamous talking points on the Green New Deal are the most unintentionally honest explanation of the neo-socialism now gripping the Democratic Party. Too honest, apparently. After her office sent the "FAQ" to NPR, The Washington Post and other news organizations, and posted a similar version on her congressional website, they were met with withering criticism -- prompting Ocasio-Cortez to furiously backtrack, seeking to disown and discredit documents her office had produced, posted and distributed. Sorry, you don't get to do that. Ocasio-Cortez told us what is really behind her Green New Deal. Now she, and the Democrats who endorsed her plan, have to live with it.

10 Ocasio-Cortez has been pilloried for her plan to "get rid of farting cows and airplanes," upgrade or replace "every building in America," replace "every combustible-engine vehicle" and provide "economic security" for people "unwilling to work" -- and rightly so. The old five-year plans of the former Soviet Union are modest, by comparison, in their pursuit of full socialism.

15 Yet the big untold story is her admission that all of this cannot be paid for simply by taxing the rich. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., is campaigning for president on a wealth tax, while Ocasio-Cortez has proposed 70 percent marginal tax rates on wealthy Americans. The message is clear: We'll soak the millionaires and billionaires and mega-rich corporations so we can give you free stuff.

20 But her talking points (even the watered-down version that was posted on her website) admit that won't come close to covering the full costs of her Green New Deal. "The level of investment required is massive," the talking points declare. "Even if every billionaire and company came together and were willing to pour all the resources at their disposal into this investment, the aggregate value of the investments they could make would not be sufficient." Her document says that funding the Green New Deal requires World War II levels of government spending of between 40 and 50 percent of gross domestic product.

25 Today, federal spending amounts to 21 percent of GDP, or \$4.4 trillion annually. Increasing it to between 40 and 50 percent of GDP would require doubling government expenditures to between \$84 and \$105 trillion over 10 years (and that's without factoring in rising GDP). But Warren's wealth tax would raise just \$2.75 trillion over 10 years. And according to the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, Ocasio-Cortez's 70 percent marginal rate might raise at best \$189 billion over 10 years, and could actually cost the federal government \$63.5 billion in lost revenue by stifling economic growth and encouraging capital flight.

30 Taxing the rich won't come close to covering the costs of the Green New Deal, which includes a bunch of socialist policies that have nothing to do with climate change. Manhattan Institute budget expert Brian Riedl has calculated the 10-year costs using liberal and nonpartisan sources. The results are stunning: \$32 trillion for a single-payer health care plan; \$6.8 trillion for a government jobs guarantee; \$2 trillion for education, medical leave, job training and retirement security; and between \$5 trillion and \$40 trillion to fund universal basic income to support those who are "unwilling" to work. (The final price depends on how "universal" it is.) Grand total? Between \$46 and \$81 trillion.

35 The only way to raise the revenue for even the low end of that estimate, he calculates, would require establishing a European-style value-added tax of 87 percent on everything we buy, or a new 37 percent payroll tax for every American (on top of the current 15.3 percent payroll tax and all existing federal, state and local taxes.)

40 And that covers the price tag only before we even get to the energy and environmental policies in the Green New Deal. It is virtually impossible to accurately calculate the cost of replacing every vehicle that uses a combustion engine; bringing high-speed rail to every corner of America; upgrading or replacing every building in America; and replacing all fossil fuel energy with alternative energy sources. We're talking hundreds of trillions of dollars. It would be virtually impossible to pay for it. And Americans don't want to anyway. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that 56 percent say they support Medicare-for-all, but when they learn it requires more taxes, 60 percent oppose it. With her FAQ, Ocasio-Cortez has inadvertently exposed the neo-socialist lie that you can get something for nothing. The Democratic Party's embrace of that lie is going to get President Trump re-elected.

We need a unique touch to bring our high streets back, says SIR JOHN HAYES

Sir JOHN HAYES, Sun, May 19, 2019, *Express*

AS I GREW up on a council estate in south-east London, my mother, like so many others, spent the housekeeping at the local parade of shops. Mrs Baines, the chemist, was a valued source of advice on ailments while Mr Alexander, the grocer, looked after his customers because he knew that if he did so they would be back. How different from what you see in such places now. At best, you might find a burger bar, a bookmaker and a pound shop where the family butcher or greengrocer once epitomised skill, service and quality. It is not just our high streets that lack originality. The places we live are going the same way. Housing estates look the same in every part of Britain and supermarkets have replaced local shops and markets. When Napoleon called us a "nation of shopkeepers", doubtless he had in mind the family grocers, butchers and bakers that once adorned our isles. Now, sadly, they are too often replaced by monolithic superstores or high streets dominated by soulless supermarkets. Rather than the result of individual choice, dull uniformity is actually the consequence of market failure. Look at how supermarkets use their seductive grip, encouraging customers to spend more than they need, resulting in huge food waste while undercutting smaller competitors and mercilessly exploiting the farmers and food businesses that supply the retail giants. At the same time, internet companies bring congestion to our roads and cost high street jobs. Just think of the nonsense of a single item - perhaps a book - brought from miles away by van when it could just as easily have been purchased for roughly the same price from a local, independent bookstore. In this fashion, unsustainable, irresponsible consumerism is contrived. It's not just our towns that are losing their characteristic charm as they become indistinguishable from one another. When listening to the wireless, I often feel an unhappy sense of *deja vu*. Much modern music seems to sound the same, lacking the originality of yesteryear. A mix of blandness and grubbiness prevails. Why has so much pop been reduced to the crass and the crude? I suppose it's because the moguls know that this kind of music sells, not because it excites or enthral, but because of its bland predictability. As with the high streets, it's the lowest common denominator. The 20th century was an extraordinary period of artistic innovation and popular music thrived. From the great American songbook to Bob Dylan, the Beatles and David Bowie, imagination fuelled innovation. By contrast, for music lovers this century hasn't begun well. [...] Such a cultural framework is diminishing our quality of life and deconstructing our once flourishing civil society. But only last month came a glimmer of hope, as the Competition and Markets Authority ruled out the merger of Sainsbury's and Asda. It would, they rightly determined, lead to "substantial lessening of competition". Rather than corporate conglomerates, we need the opposite - a multiplicity of places for farmers to sell produce and for consumers to buy it. Thankfully, the Government has begun to support independent shops, with the promise of a Future High Streets Fund, but more is needed. Why not use revenue from increased taxes on greedy online giants to free small, family businesses from tax altogether? The charm that family-run stores embody cannot be matched by online giants nor chain stores. Self-service checkouts mean that people can enter any supermarket and have identical experiences, with no social interaction. The horror is exaggerated by online shopping, where transactions are completed with a click, without the friendly personal service provided by the local stores that once graced most of our lives. We are all diminished when shopping becomes merely a function. The most important particularity in a sea of ubiquity is people. People are never identical. We each have quirks, tastes and talents. My work means I meet thousands of splendid individuals each with their own story. They people our nation, a place to be proud of. When they visit Lincolnshire's Fens, which I am proud to represent, they seek what is special, particular, local and unique. Our sense of place is framed by our glorious homeland. As where we live comes to look like anywhere else, that sense of place, and communal pride springing from it, is eroded. If we are to breathe life back into our high streets and restore vibrant popular culture then it is the beauty of individuality and value of uniqueness that should be embraced.

The Guardian, Sun 5 May 2019

The Florida teachers who think arming them is the 'most dangerous decision ever', by Richard Luscombe

5 Vivid in Joy Jackson's memory is the sound of a bullet whistling just past her ear, fired towards her head during an incident at the Miami school where she is a teacher.

A teenage student with an emotional/behavioral disorder had brought the gun to campus, and as it was being secured by a police officer, the weapon accidentally discharged. Nobody was hurt but the incident a few years ago certainly alarmed Jackson. "I felt the air coming close by my ear," she told the Guardian this week. "It was so close that the people in the office started screaming because they thought I was shot," she said. "And that was with a trained police officer [at the scene]. Can you only imagine it with a teacher that hadn't gone through all the training that officer had?"

10 The experience is central to Jackson's conviction that the Florida legislature's decision last week to allow educators to possess firearms in their classrooms— a recommendation of the commission that investigated the 2018 Parkland high school massacre – could prove catastrophic.

15 "Imagine a student with an emotional behavioral disability with a gun, or a teacher that maybe has become afraid of a student – who says the student won't be able to disarm them?" said Jackson, 65, a teacher with more than four decades' experience working with special needs students.

"The first thing you do is pull out [a weapon]. Who's going to protect that educator if that gun goes off by mistake? As far as arming teachers is concerned, I am so 100% against it until I can't see straight.

20 It's the most dangerous decision I have ever heard." Jackson, who works at the Robert Renick educational center in Miami Gardens, a school for pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade students with emotional and behavioral difficulties, sees the controversial bill as the work of powerful National Rifle Association (NRA) lobbyists in Tallahassee working with the state's Republican lawmakers.

"I know the NRA gives humungous money to lobbyists, I get it," she said. "But this is more than money. You can't pay for a life. If the NRA wants to do something, pay for more officers to be in these buildings, not someone who's not received the proper training."

25 Jackson was one of several Florida teachers sharing with the Guardian their concerns at the arming of teachers, opposed 57-40% in a Quinnipiac poll in March. The bill now awaits the Republican governor Ron DeSantis's expected signature, to become law.

30 **'Unrealistic' training goals**

Kyle Savage, a fifth-grade teacher at Cape View elementary school in Cape Canaveral, is a former military police officer with extensive experience in handling guns, and has a background that would seem to make him an ideal candidate for Florida's "armed guardian" programme.

35 But as he had testified to politicians, he doesn't believe teachers can fill the role of a professional armed presence on campus. "The training requirements aren't realistic," said Savage, 33.

(...) Financing the programme is another concern of Savage, in a state that ranks 48th in the nation for teacher salaries, according to the National Education Association.

"In public education Florida we're finding obvious ways not to spend money, so I find it hard to believe now we're going to spend money to make sure a teacher can go to the range, the teacher has the proper training, year in year out that teacher has the training they need," he said. "I want my kids to know that I'm a teacher, I love them, I care for them, I don't want them to think, 'Well, my teacher has a gun on the side of his hip today.' It changes the whole environment in the classroom."

40 That separation is why Savage is reluctant to bring his military experience into his classroom. "I've thought about the question a lot," he said. "Do I think I could take down an active shooter? Yes, 100%.

45 The question I ask myself is would I regret it afterwards? It conflicts me, I'll be honest."

Although the new law allows individual school districts to opt out – and several of the state's largest counties including Miami-Dade, Broward, Pinellas and Hillsborough have all stated their teachers will not be carrying guns in public schools – Florida has more than 3,000 private and charter schools that can decide individually. For example a charter school in Manatee county raised eyebrows earlier this school year by hiring a former combat veteran to patrol in military fatigues and an assault rifle.

50 "We are teachers. We're not intended to be like policemen and security people. We are not meant to carry weapons," said Lesly Chamate, 44, an art teacher at a small private school in Broward county who said she would probably quit if her colleagues came to school armed.

55 "Teachers and guns don't go together. How do you know how they're going to react in the moment? If you want to do that become a policeman, go and join the army:

"It seems crazy, an art teacher with a weapon. In middle school classes scissors are banned. How can you have weapons?"

The GuardianOPINION - *The ticking bomb of climate change is America's biggest threat*

Michael H Fuchs, 29 Nov 2018

Imagine that US leaders were told that hundreds of nuclear weapons were set on a timer to detonate across the planet, progressively and in increasing numbers, over the coming years and decades. The lives of millions would be upended, if not made nearly impossible to survive, by transformed weather patterns and resource scarcity. Tens of millions would become migrants as regions became uninhabitable. Millions would die, more and more as time went on. If this science fiction were reality, US leaders would lead an international effort to immediately disarm and dismantle the weapons. But this isn't science fiction. Climate change is a ticking time bomb, literally threatening to end human life on earth over the coming centuries. As climate journalist Peter Brannen describes it, Earth faced a similar crisis hundreds of millions of years ago during the "Great Dying" when volcanoes spewed so much carbon dioxide into the air – including magma that blanketed an area as large as the lower 48 US states, 1km deep – that it almost killed all life. Today, Brannen says, "we're shooting carbon dioxide up into the atmosphere 10 times faster than the ancient volcanoes". Even in the shorter term, climate change will make the world far more dangerous. A World Bank Group report estimates that climate change could drive 140 million people to move within their countries' borders by 2050. A report by the Trump administration finds climate change could reduce the size of the US economy by 10% – more than twice as bad as the worst part of the Great Recession – by 2100. Growing resource scarcity could cause more wars. Deadly and destructive extreme weather events such as Hurricanes Harvey and Maria and California's Camp fire are mild symptoms of the plague to come. America's failure is not for lack of capacity to safeguard against future threats – the US invests hundreds of billions of dollars every year in defense to deter adversaries such as Russia and China, and tens of billions more in intelligence capabilities to monitor threats. Instead, America is paralyzed by a lack of political will. Donald Trump and his allies in Congress – many of whom deny the existence of climate change – are making the problem worse. The president announced his intent to withdraw the US from the Paris climate agreement and is rolling back regulations that would have cut emissions.

Despite this dark reality, there is reason for hope. In 2015, the world came together to negotiate the Paris agreement, which set the goal of limiting global temperature increases to well below 2C. Despite a hostile Trump administration, many US governors, mayors, businesses and private citizens are already leading the way. So are other countries as they seize the economic and public health opportunity that comes with a clean energy future.

The path ahead, to say the least, is daunting. Even if the US were not to leave the Paris climate agreement, the action required to realize its potential is enormous. US policymakers will need to use every policy tool in their toolbox to drive unprecedented deployment of clean energy and build out zero-carbon transportation infrastructure. When the US leads by example, domestic emissions will fall, and new diplomatic doors to more ambitious climate action will open.

Climate activist Bill McKibben says that "global warming ... is a world war aimed at us all" and recommends that, like the national effort forged during the second world war to defeat the Axis powers, the US must "mobilize" American industry and citizens to transform to a clean energy economy.

Everybody will need to pitch in. For example, when the Obama administration was negotiating the bilateral climate deal with China in 2014 that made the Paris agreement possible, my colleagues and I in the east Asia bureau at the state department worked with the US climate negotiators on a statement with the 10 nations of Asean committing to cut emissions – a statement only made possible by the US-China deal. The painstaking negotiations for this relatively symbolic statement were indicative of how much work the US needs to put into the climate effort in every corner of the world – and the ripple effects it can have elsewhere.

It's time for the US to treat climate change as the national security challenge it is. Diplomats are ready to negotiate new agreements. Development experts can support sustainable solutions for countries facing resource scarcity and in need of resilient infrastructure and community designs that can withstand more intense and damaging extreme weather events. The military can help respond to extreme weather disasters. National security experts around the world already recognize climate change as a serious threat to global stability and are ready to answer a global call to action.

Without success in tackling climate change, eventually none of the other threats we face will matter.

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Boris Johnson Faces Trial for ‘Huge Lie’ That Dominated Brexit Referendum Campaign

Nico Hines, *The Daily Beast*, 05.29.19

LONDON—The frontrunner to become Britain’s next prime minister this summer has been summoned to court to face allegations of misconduct in public office over alleged lies told during the Brexit campaign. In an unprecedented ruling issued here on Wednesday, a judge has paved the way for Boris Johnson to stand trial for a false claim that was at the very center of the Brexit campaign. The Vote Leave campaign bus was emblazoned with the slogan: “We send the EU £350m a week.” The independent U.K. Statistics Authority said the figure was misleading and the Institute for Fiscal Studies argued it was “absurd,” and yet Vote Leave, and Johnson in particular, continued to use the number throughout the hotly contested Brexit referendum in 2016. One anti-Brexit campaigner was so aggrieved by the prominent use of the claim—which became a symbol of “fake news” during and after the bitter campaign—that he has crowdfunded a legal challenge. To the shock of the British political establishment, a judge agreed Wednesday that Johnson, the former Conservative mayor of London, should face trial for deliberately lying to the public. “It is alleged that the conduct of which the proposed defendant is accused was a huge lie calculated to mislead the electorate by using inaccurate and misleading statements,” District Judge Margot Coleman wrote in her written statement. The timing of this extraordinary case could scarcely be worse for Johnson, coming less than a week after he confirmed that he would run to succeed Theresa May as leader of the Conservative Party and thus British prime minister. Although ardent Brexiteers are likely to rally to Johnson’s side, it will reinforce the notion that the controversial—at times, bumbling—character seems to attract unnecessary trouble. Around 12 Conservative lawmakers are expected to take part in the leadership race, which will be whittled down to two candidates by Conservative members of Parliament before the finalists are put to a vote of party members. Johnson is extremely popular with the grassroots members. Even before this latest hiccup, many of his colleagues in Parliament were engaged in a “Stop Boris” campaign as they wanted to ensure that safer pairs of hands were put forward to the vote of the members. The judge in London said the campaigner Marcus Ball, who raised \$250,000 to bring the case, had provided “ample evidence” that Johnson was knowingly misleading the public. For example, Johnson said Britain sent the EU around £10 (\$12) billion per year during a TV interview in May 2016, which was around half of the controversial £350 (\$450) million a week figure. “I accept that the public offices held by Mr. Johnson provide status but with that status comes influence and authority,” she wrote. “[Ball’s lawyer] submits there will be seldom a more serious misconduct allegation against a member of Parliament or mayor than to lie repeatedly to the voting public on a national and international platform, in order to win your desired outcome. I am satisfied this element of the offense is *prima facie* satisfied.” This statement implies no guilt on Johnson’s part, merely that the threshold for trial has been met. “The allegations which have been made are unproven accusations and I do not make any findings of fact,” she said. Johnson has not yet responded to the ruling but his legal argument submitted to the court argued that the private prosecution was no more than a political “stunt.” “This application is brought for political purposes,” said Adrian Darbishire QC, representing Johnson. He said the claim was based on public information and was properly scrutinized throughout the campaign. “As with very many claims made in political campaigns, it was challenged, contradicted, and criticized,” he said. None of Johnson’s leadership rivals have issued statements after the bombshell ruling, which is likely to become a divisive issue in the campaign. Former Conservative cabinet minister and barrister David Mellor said the ruling was a “deplorable absurdity.” “You really cannot have the courts adjudicating on what politicians [do] during election campaigns. There madness lies,” he told the Press Association, suggesting there may be a backlash in favor of Johnson. “This is a bad day for British justice. But probably, contrary to the wishes of those who have crowdfunded this nonsense, a big boost to Boris.”

London is still the UK's golden goose – and that needs to change

Jack Brown, Mon 20 May 2019, *The Guardian*

London could be justified in feeling a little unappreciated right now. Britons outside the capital think of its residents as “arrogant” and “insular”, an investigation by the Centre for London has found; London itself is seen as expensive and crowded. Pride in the capital decreases with distance from it, and appears to be declining over time. And while over three-quarters of Brits agree that London contributes to the national economy, just 16% feel it contributes to the economy where they live. There is a long-held and persistent sense that London is too dominant in national life. Some also perceive its success as coming at the expense of the rest of the country – an idea that has re-emerged periodically throughout history, most famously in the 1820s when parliamentarian William Cobbett described the capital as a “Great Wen”, a gigantic cyst draining the life out of the rest of the nation. Today, the capital’s appetite for investment in its infrastructure is seen as insatiable, serving only to strengthen the city’s magnetism, dragging talented young people out of the regions and into its grasp. This idea seems to be on the rise, and the Guardian has just published a series entitled London Versus. But does this perception reflect reality? The first thing to note is that the capital’s economy is seriously strong. With just 13% of the national population, London is responsible for 23% of the UK economy. London’s 9 million residents live in the beating heart of an economically connected Wider South East mega-region (Greater London plus the south-east and east of England regions) of 22 million. The Wider South East is the only part of the country that runs a “fiscal surplus” with the rest of the nation – it contributes more in taxation than it receives in public expenditure. Within the Wider South East, London’s surplus is particularly high: in 2016/17, the capital contributed £32.6bn more to the national purse than it took out. That money was then redistributed around the country, funding hospitals, schools and railways. If London was declared an independent country tomorrow, the rest of the nation would soon be bankrupt. But the capital also receives a lot in return. In 2016/17, Greater London received the most public spending per head of any English region. Much of this comes in the form of capital investment, often involving highly visible infrastructure projects that can generate resentment and envy outside of the capital. Yet while London received the most investment per head, the south-east was the region that received the least. And who exactly is Crossrail for? Much investment of this kind may be in London, but is it really for Londoners alone? Perhaps this is not the most useful way of looking at things. Londoners do not have an easy time of it, despite projects like Crossrail. In fact, the high cost of housing means the average Londoner is worse off than those elsewhere in the UK. And this is particularly true for those households with a below median income. Child poverty rates in London are the highest of any English region or UK country, and this is expected to worsen in the coming years. And the capital has some of the most affluent but also some of the most deprived communities in the nation. Despite all the discussion since the EU referendum of the UK’s “left-behind towns”, poor Londoners are also at risk of being “forgotten”. Between 2009/10 and 2017/18, cities bore the brunt of local authority spending cuts, with London accounting for a disproportionate 30% of all cuts in Britain. The Brexit vote revealed a divided nation. But these divisions were more complex than simply “London versus the rest”. [...] With its contribution to the national purse overwhelmingly spent elsewhere in the country, it is in London’s interests as much as anyone else’s that the UK’s other cities, towns and regions can thrive. According to YouGov, most Britons outside London believe the capital gets more than its fair share of public spending. But it is reassuring that even those who held an unfavourable view of the capital conceded the nation was better off with London than without it. The challenge ahead is to ensure that London is seen as a unique asset, not a necessary evil. London may feel like a different country to some people, but the UK and its capital have more in common than that which divides them. That includes a mutual interest in seeing the nation’s economy grow outside of London.

UK businesses using artificial intelligence to monitor staff activity

Robert Booth, Social affairs correspondent, Sun 7 Apr 2019, *The Guardian*

5 Dozens of UK business owners are using artificial intelligence to scrutinise staff behaviour minute-to-minute by harvesting data on who emails whom and when, who accesses and edits files and who meets whom and when. The actions of 130,000 people in the UK and abroad are being monitored in real time by the Isaak system, which ranks staff members' attributes. Designed by a London company, Status Today, it is the latest example of a trend for using algorithms to manage people, which trade unions fear creates distrust but others predict could reduce the effects of bias. The system shows bosses how collaborative workers are and whether they are "influencers" or "change-makers".

10 The computer can compare activity data with qualitative assessments of workers from personnel files or sales performance figures to give managers a detailed picture of how behaviour affects output. Users so far include five law firms, a training company called Smarter Not Harder and a London estate agency, JBrown, according to Status Today, which promises "real-time insights into each employee and their position within the organisational network". Workers do not automatically have a right to see the data, which is controlled by the employer. The insurer Hiscox and the IT firm Cisco have used the system for short-term analysis rather than continuous surveillance, Status Today said. Critics say such systems risk increasing pressure on workers who fear the judgment of the algorithm, and that it could encourage people not to take breaks or spend time in creative thought that will not be logged. "If performance targets are being fine-tuned by AI and your progress towards them being measured by AI, that will only multiply the pressure," said Ursula Huws, a professor of labour and globalisation at the University of Hertfordshire. "People are deemed not to be working if they take their hands off the keyboard for five minutes. But they could be thinking, and that doesn't get measured. What is this doing for innovation, which needs creative workers?" She said there were risks to mental health if people did not feel free to take breaks, for example to surf social media for a few minutes or play a game. A survey released this week suggests UK workers tend to procrastinate for on average three hours a day. The Isaak system has already gathered data on more than 1bn actions, which it uses to pinpoint "central individuals within a network" to better allocate workload and responsibilities, "ultimately improving the overall workplace environment and reducing stress and overworking". It is part of what experts have labelled the "precision economy", in which more and more aspects of life will be measured. The Royal Society of Arts predicts that in the next 15 years, life insurance premiums will be set with data from wearable monitors and workers in retail and hospitality will be tracked for time spent inactive. As gig economy working spreads, people will qualify for the best jobs only with performance and empathy metrics that pass a high threshold. Those with lower scores will have access to only the most menial and sometimes miserable tasks such as content moderation on social media, the RSA has predicted. Ankur Modi, the chief executive of Status Today, said his system aimed to provide a "wellbeing analysis" and could detect overwork – for example at evenings and weekends. [...] He argued that it could help bosses cut out bias and discrimination by removing subjectivity from management decisions. AI ideas that are being developed elsewhere have included the use of facial recognition software and mood monitoring at work, recording a worker's location on wearable devices and the monitoring of keyboard strokes. A survey by the Trades Union Congress last year found that a majority of workers were opposed to all of these. The TUC's general secretary, Frances O'Grady, said: "Workers want to be trusted to do their jobs. But this kind of high-tech snooping creates fear and distrust. And by undermining morale, it could do businesses more harm than good. Employers should only introduce surveillance technologies after negotiation and agreement with the workforce, including union representatives. There should always be a workplace agreement in place that clarifies where the line is drawn for legitimate use, and that protects the privacy of working people."

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The National Review

Backers of a Green New Deal Embrace Their Fantasies

By JONAH GOLDBERG, February 8, 2019

It's not a very serious proposal, but the worldview behind it is dangerous.

5 On Thursday, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D., N.Y.) and Senator Ed Markey (D., Mass.) introduced what many news outlets described as “legislation” for the Green New Deal, a wildly ambitious plan to eliminate the American fossil-fuel industry within a decade or so. It’s worth noting that it’s not legislation as people normally understand the term. It’s a resolution titled “Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal.” In other words, even if it passed — a
10 considerable if — nothing would really happen. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi isn’t taking it too seriously. She didn’t put Ocasio-Cortez on the new Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, and when asked about the resolution, she was dismissive. “It will be one of several or maybe many suggestions that we receive,” Pelosi said. “The green dream or whatever they call it, nobody knows what it is, but they’re for it, right?”
15 I bring this up for the simple reason that a lot of people on the left and the right have every incentive to make this thing a much bigger deal than it is. Still, given that almost everyone running for the Democratic presidential nomination feels obliged to say they’re for it, it’s worth taking somewhat seriously. This raises the first of several problems: It’s not a very serious proposal. The goal is to eliminate the
20 fossil-fuel industry over a decade and, perversely, phase out nuclear power over a slightly longer period. All of the jobs dependent on these industries would be replaced by government-guaranteed jobs. “We set a goal to get to net-zero, rather than zero emissions, in 10 years,” the backers explain in an outline, “because we aren’t sure that we’ll be able to fully get rid of farting cows and airplanes that
25 fast, but we think we can ramp up renewable manufacturing and power production, retrofit every building in America, build the smart grid, overhaul transportation and agriculture, plant lots of trees and restore our ecosystem to get to net-zero.” Well, at least the plan isn’t too ambitious. Retrofitting “every building in America” can be done in 10 years, but eliminating all the gassy cows will take a bit longer. Maybe we’ll move them all to Hawaii, which with the near-abolition of airplanes will be effectively cut off from America anyway.
30 Even if you take these goals seriously, as a practical matter it’s a fantasy masquerading as green virtue-signaling. But it’s a fantasy based on a worldview that should be treated seriously because it’s so dangerous. NPR’s Steve Inskeep asked Ocasio-Cortez whether she was comfortable with the “massive
35 government intervention” critics say is required by such an undertaking. “We have tried their approach for 40 years,” Ocasio-Cortez replied. “For 40 years we have tried to let the private sector take care of this. They said, ‘We got this, we can do this, the forces of the market are going to force us to innovate.’ Except for the fact that there’s a little thing in economics called externalities. And what that means is that a corporation can dump pollution in the river and they don’t
40 have to pay for it, and taxpayers have to pay.” The fascinating thing is that Ocasio-Cortez thinks this is actually true. Thanks to the government intervention known as the Clean Water Act and other regulations, corporations can’t pollute waterways. Ironically, the only entities that can pollute with impunity are government agencies such as the EPA, which did precisely that in Colorado in 2015. Closer to home,
45 ExxonMobil has spent millions cleaning up Newtown Creek, which happens to run through Ocasio-Cortez’s native Brooklyn, close to her district. Ironically, the city of New York is still allowed to pollute the creek whenever there’s a heavy rainfall. Even if Ocasio-Cortez was speaking figuratively in her talk of “externalities,” the larger point remains. The free market hasn’t been given free rein, and over the last 40 years the free market and
50 government regulations alike have made laudable environmental progress. In 2017, the U.S. had the largest reductions of CO2 emissions in the world for the ninth time this century. Rather than celebrate and build on that reality, the Green New Dealers would rather embrace their fantasies — and waste a lot of time and money in the process.

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'The NHS is not for sale': Health Secretary hits back after US Ambassador says healthcare should be on the table in any transatlantic post-Brexit trade talks

By Daniel Martin, policy editor for *The Daily Mail* and Joel Adams for *Mailonline*, 2 June 2019.

5 Claims by the US ambassador that America would want access to the NHS as part of any post-Brexit trade deal prompted a huge backlash last night. MPs on both sides of the political spectrum criticised Woody Johnson after he said the 'entire economy' would have to be part of any trans-Atlantic free trade agreement. The row came with President Trump just hours away from arriving in the UK for the official three-day state visit starting today, which will include a banquet at Buckingham Palace. [...] After his comments about the 'entire economy' being up for negotiation, Ambassador Johnson was asked by Andrew Marr if this included healthcare and replied: 'I would think so.' Last night Tory leadership contenders joined with Labour in telling the Americans that 'the NHS is not for sale'. Matt Hancock, the Health Secretary, said: 'My American friends, know this. The NHS is not for sale. Yes we'd love to make it cheaper to buy your life-saving pharmaceuticals – but the NHS will not be on the table in any future trade talks.' And Labour health spokesman Jonathan Ashworth said: 'The ambassador's comments are terrifying, and show that a real consequence of a No Deal Brexit, followed by a trade deal with Trump, will be our NHS up for sale. This absolutely should not be on the table. Nigel Farage and the Tories want to rip apart our publicly funded NHS. Labour will always defend it.' Mr Johnson said the US was already looking at all the elements of a trade deal 'to get everything lined up so when the time comes'. 'We're going to have a great relationship with your country whatever happens,' he added. Asked whether healthcare has to be part of the deal, he replied: 'I think probably the entire economy, in a trade deal all things that are traded will be on the table.' Pressed on whether this includes healthcare, he replied: 'I would think so.' Mr Johnson added: 'Your national healthcare service is the pride of the country. It's a highly emotionally charged issue.' Lib Dem leadership candidate Ed Davey said: 'The US ambassador today let the cat out of the bag. Our NHS is indeed up for sale under the Conservatives.' In an interview with the Sunday Times, President Trump said he would be keen to offer the next PM a trade deal if they head for a No Deal Brexit. 'We have the potential to be an incredible trade partner with the UK,' he said. 'The numbers they can do will be tremendous. We're doing relatively little compared to what we could. I think much bigger than European Union.' When asked if he thought a trade deal could be concluded within a year, Mr Trump said: 'We could work on it much faster, we could work on it very, very quickly.' The row over the NHS broke out with just hours to go until Air Force One is due to touch down in London, with the capital decked out to greet the US President with US and UK flags adorning The Mall and a ring of steel erected around the Ambassador's Regent's Park residence. Prince Andrew will accompany Mr Trump for two of the three days of his trip, with officials hoping the Duke can defuse any political problems with conversations about golf, the Sunday Telegraph reported. Mr Trump is believed to have so far spent over 100 days of his 862-day presidency playing golf while Prince Andrew is qualified to a professional level. The men met 20 years ago at the president's Mar-a-Lago estate and golf course in Palm Springs, Florida, and are already well-acquainted sharing a mutual friend in disgraced millionaire Jeffrey Epstein, who was jailed on child prostitution charges in 2008. While the men make polite conversation, hundreds of thousands of activists are preparing to paralyse London with mass demonstrations. Fears for Mr Trump's safety have meant he will not be involved in a carriage procession down the Mall or the official welcome on Horse Guards Parade - which will instead take place in Buckingham Palace's garden. More than 20,000 police officers will be deployed at 20 separate protest events planned across the country in a security operation expected to cost about £18million. The president's refusal to accept claims of climate change is likely to bring about some debate with the Prince of Wales who has championed environmental causes for decades.

Banning asylum seekers from working is both morally and economically unjustifiable

ANANYA CHOWDHURY, 25 MARCH 2019, *The Telegraph*

5 Three weeks from now, millions will celebrate Passover, when under the leadership of Moses, the Jewish people were freed from tyranny under the Pharaoh and sought refuge in the land of Judah. His commandments are well-known across the globe but unlike our own do not include restrictions on those fleeing persecution and setting up new lives in new lands. Perhaps Moses should've set in stone that those seeking refuge have a right to a new life. Perhaps he should have said that families seeking asylum must have a chance to change their stars, to work and build businesses, to provide for their families and give back to their host country. Fortunately for Sajid Javid, the Home Secretary, our laws aren't claimed to have been passed down from on high. And when in December 2018, the Home Secretary said that he would like to review the ban on asylum seekers working as they wait for Home Office decisions, he was moving the debate in the right direction. Right now, asylum seekers in the UK are only able to apply for the right to work after they have been living on a meagre £5.39 per day for at least a year. Even those that do gain permission have their job opportunities restricted to a fiendishly obscure list of highly skilled professions included on the government's Shortage Occupation list. This list includes professionals from classical ballet dancers to bioinformaticians: unlikely livelihoods for potential asylum seekers. No other European country, the US or Canada has such a strict waiting period for asylum seekers looking for work. [...] Britain was once lauded for being the workshop of the world. Now our refusal to let vulnerable individuals utilise the tools of our workshop is not only embarrassing but counterproductive. In entrepreneurship, he who dares, really does win. Business is the backbone, not merely of a prosperous economy, but society, gender relations and culture. Evidence reveals that risk-taking is a trait which makes normal businessmen into the likes of Richard Branson and Steve Jobs. So it is no surprise that some of the most acclaimed enterprises have been started by immigrant refugees who have risked life and limb to get to new lands. Sergey Brin left the USSR as a boy to escape institutional anti-Semitism, he brought you Google. Daniel Aaron, an orphaned refugee from Nazi Germany and US soldier brought you Comcast. George N. Hatsopoulos, from Nazi-occupied Greece to the US and brought you a billion-pound biotechnology company; Thermo Fisher Scientific. If just 50 per cent of those waiting to hear on their application decision were able to work full time on minimum wage, the net benefit to the economy would be £42.4 million. And this is only the short term projection; once people are able to integrate the numbers will only be higher. The Government would save on the cash support it provides while reaping the benefits of income tax and national insurance. Individuals on both sides of the immigration debate have reasonable objections to each other's proposals. Many are sceptical of the prospect of immigrants successfully integrating. Others, while understanding the benefits of asylum seekers working, believe it will be a pull factor attracting even more immigration. Sadly both sides are ignoring evidence in their debate. 72 per cent of asylum seekers had not known prior to arriving in the UK that they were not allowed to work. One study commissioned by the Home Office revealed that there is no link between economic rights and the destination choices of those seeking asylum. There is no credible evidence to support the right to work as a pull factor. What's more, social assimilation goes hand in hand with economic integration. People skills are rewarding; incentives to learn English and adopt cultural norms are bolstered by the prospect of promotion. The Lift the Ban coalition, made up of over 150 organisations, highlights the real-life implications of the ban. Asylum seekers have had their lives transformed into something which should only be consigned to the pages of a Franz Kafka story, not modern day Britain. These are people who have often experienced maltreatment unimaginable to the average Briton today.

We need a new Tory leader who can heal the whole country, says STEPHEN POLLARD

Sat, May 18, 2019, *Express*

IT WAS the least surprising political news of the decade. On Thursday Boris Johnson confirmed: "Of course I'm going to go for it." Speak to Conservative members and the same message comes back every time: if he makes it to the final ballot, Boris will stroll to victory. No other candidate comes close to his popularity with Conservative members. But it's a huge "if", because for all his popularity with members, it's impossible to be sure that his fellow MPs will make him one of the two final contenders to be voted on by members. Many observers think it's more likely that they won't. All of which means that the leadership is wide open. Barely a day seems to go by without one or other Tory MP posing in their kitchen or living room for a newspaper profile designed to flag up their leadership credentials. To date, Andrea Leadsom, Esther McVey and Rory Stewart have joined Boris in confirming they will run and it's pretty much guaranteed that Michael Gove, Matthew Hancock, Jeremy Hunt, Sajid Javid and Dominic Raab will join them - along with the likes of Steve Baker and perhaps a dozen others who don't realistically expect to win but want to make a point by standing. But the one thing we know from previous Conservative contests is that outsiders often win. Don't forget that Andrea Leadsom made it to the final run-off in 2016 before pulling out. David Cameron was very much the outsider when he ran in 2005. And of course Margaret Thatcher was initially regarded by her fellow Conservative MPs as something of a fringe candidate in 1975. Most famously, our greatest ever leader, Winston Churchill, was regarded with close to contempt by his fellow Conservative MPs until his moment arrived in 1940. So even though most of the candidates aren't even household names in their own constituencies, that doesn't mean they won't win. Which begs the question: who should? Instead of scrolling through the various names, let's look at that question from the other side of the telescope - not the names but what they need to do if they become prime minister. One way or another, we have to find a way to move beyond the current Brexit stalemate. It's difficult to see how a change of leader alone would do that but it's also clear that without a change of leader there is no way forward. But more broadly, the Brexit stalemate reflects a national divide - and despair - that appears to getting worse with every passing day. This isn't the usual Labour-Conservative divide but something more fundamental and more worrying. Among Brexiteers, for example, there is a growing and deepening sense of betrayal - that the political classes have chosen simply to ignore the result of the referendum. Remainers, too, feel that we are in a crisis that no one envisaged when we voted in 2016, with a possible, and perhaps even likely, departure without a deal. This isn't even about who is right and who is wrong. It's about the total absence of leadership that stems from Mrs May. So the most basic quality a new PM has to have is that indefinable spark that should come with holding the highest office - the power to lead and to set a course. Tony Benn divided politicians into weathervanes and signposts. The former swing with the wind, following opinion polls and fashion. The latter set the direction of travel and bring people with them. Theresa May - and both her two Tory predecessors, David Cameron and John Major - were weathervanes. Margaret Thatcher - and, yes, Tony Blair - were signposts. We need a signpost. There is also something more basic. The next PM has to be able to take on and beat Jeremy Corbyn. Nothing else counts if they cannot do that. The threat the Labour Party now poses to our democracy and way of life is so stark that all else pales before it. That means that they need to fizz with ideas. They need to be able to show that the current government of the walking dead is an aberration - that there is a reason to vote Conservative with policies and an outlook that chime with ordinary working people. I can't resist some speculation. Michael Gove has shown in every job he has held that he has the intellectual grasp to set a policy course that is distinctive and sensible. But if the party wants to skip a generation, Health Secretary Matthew Hancock has been floating a series of ideas in recent weeks. The truth is, none of us has a clue who will win. That may turn out to be no bad thing.

The National Review, By DAVID FRENCH, May 10, 2019

The Senate Intelligence Committee Is Right to Subpoena Donald Trump Jr.

We are now officially in the midst of yet another Republican civil skirmish. Two days ago, *Axios* broke the news that the GOP-controlled Senate Intelligence Committee had “subpoenaed Donald Trump Jr. to answer questions about his previous testimony before Senate investigators.” At issue, we later learned, is an apparent discrepancy between Trump Jr.’s previous testimony and the testimony of President Trump’s former lawyer and “fixer,” Michael Cohen. Reportedly, the committee subpoenaed Donald Jr. several weeks ago, before Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell declared “case closed” on the question of whether there had been a “conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign.” So shouldn’t Richard Burr, the Republican chairman of the intelligence committee, drop the subpoena? Hasn’t Special Counsel Robert Mueller already covered this ground? (...) Despite Mueller’s report, Congress still has a vital role to play, and the president’s allies should not be permitted to neuter the superior branch of government. Let’s make this as simple as possible. **First**, the special counsel’s report does not render the Senate Intelligence Committee’s work either moot or irrelevant. The special counsel and the committee have different missions. As Marco Rubio explained yesterday, “Mueller [was] a criminal-justice investigation. Ours is an intelligence investigation about the Russia threat and about the way our agencies performed.”

While Rubio understates the counterintelligence elements of the Mueller investigation, the differences between it and the Intelligence Committee’s investigation are still obvious and important. Mueller, for example, did not focus on the full extent of the broader Russian threat beyond the campaign or on evaluating the performance of our own intelligence agencies in confronting that threat. The scope of the special-counsel investigation and the focus of the Senate Intelligence Committee investigation overlap, but they are not identical – not by a long shot.

It’s a matter of sheer logic and common sense that a broader examination of Russian activity and intentions will include an examination of Russian ties or contacts with American citizens *even if those ties or contacts aren’t criminal*. Moreover, it’s just naïve and strange to believe that in the absence of criminal conspiracies there is no need for further inquiry. While there is no meaningful evidence that Russia’s disruption operation swayed the outcome of the 2016 election, in other respects it was remarkably successful at sowing discord, confusion, and division in the American body politic. It’s vital to understand exactly what Russia did, how Americans (including American governmental institutions) responded, and whether we’re vulnerable to future disruptions. **Second**, it’s standard (and necessary) for a congressional committee to seek additional testimony in the event of conflicting accounts. If two witnesses contradict each other, it would be investigative malpractice not to probe further. And when probing further, there is no substitute for live testimony. The ability to ask probing follow-up questions is invaluable to the quest for truth. Canned, lawyer-crafted written responses are a poor substitute for a closely examined personal account. Writing at *Commentary*, Noah Rothman has carefully noted three areas of potential interest for the Intelligence Committee: 1) Was Trump Jr. fully forthcoming with the committee about the nature and purpose of the infamous June 2016 Trump Tower meeting with Russian lawyer Natalia Veselnitskaya?; 2) Does the committee have complete information about Trump Jr.’s contacts with Wikileaks?; and, most notably, 3) How much did he know about (or participate in) efforts to build a Trump Tower Moscow? **Third**, the Senate Intelligence Committee is fulfilling its constitutional role. I completely understand the widespread GOP frustration that the special counsel’s investigation represented the executive branch investigating itself. Especially as it relates to possible obstruction of justice, this state of affairs creates confusing and complex legal distortions. (For example, can a president truly unlawfully obstruct justice by firing an employee he has a right to fire or by modifying an investigation he has a right to modify?)

But these objections and concerns simply don’t apply to the Senate Intelligence Committee, and the executive’s decision to investigate itself through the special-counsel appointment is irrelevant to the Senate’s constitutional authority and the Intelligence Committee’s oversight obligations.

The Intelligence Committee’s investigation predates the Mueller investigation. It has a different (and broader) scope than the Mueller investigation. And it operates in a separate — and superior — branch of government. Moreover, Burr’s conduct throughout the committee’s investigation has been exemplary, and the committee’s work has been professional and bipartisan. Chairman Burr is not running a “witch hunt,” and out of basic respect for the law, for the Senate, and for the constitutional structure of our government, Trump Jr. should comply with the Intelligence Committee’s subpoena. The Committee doesn’t just have a right to seek the truth from him, it has an obligation to do so. Burr’s GOP critics should stand down. He is doing exactly what he is supposed to do.