

**We can mourn Prince Philip, but not the monarchy**, Afia Hirsch

15 Apr 2021, *The Guardian*

5 Within minutes of Prince Philip's death having been announced, I began receiving messages from friends in Ghana. "My sincere condolences for your loss," one said. "May God bless you and everyone in the UK who is grieving," said another. On a human level, acknowledging respectfully the loss that comes with death makes sense. But why did these messages describe it as my loss? I am not alone in feeling that the monarchy is an institution that cannot be embraced – although even now, it is not easy to say so. If I fail to express my deference and loyalty, I will be viciously attacked by those who regard me as unpatriotic. I will be the bad Black person, the ungrateful "guest" (never mind that this is my country), the disloyal colonial subject who forgot how much Britain did for me.

10 The public reaction to Prince Philip's death has centred on how much he, personally, has done. By all accounts he was the most active member of the royal family, having conducted, apparently, more than 20,000 engagements, and holding more than 800 presidencies and patronages. Many young people benefited from the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme. But these acts of public service come with strings attached. We become complicit in a toxic transaction that, in exchange for their privileges, deprives the royals of their privacy or control over their own destinies, and entitles us to endless and poisonous coverage of the minutiae of their lives.

15 On our side of the bargain, we abandon our supposed commitment to meritocracy and equality by accepting that these human beings are born deserving of special reverence. We receive access to their charity, but in return we lose our freedom to challenge their authority. The royals' good deeds and charitable endeavours are not in themselves a justification for the monarchy.

20 The truth is that there is no escaping the haunting legacy of empire. Its ghosts have long taken possession of our royal family, turning them into emperors without colonies, bounty hoarders without raids, conquerors without wars. Instead, they are the heads of a Commonwealth in which the colonised are rebranded "friends" with "a shared history". This is fantasy stuff. As is the idea – ludicrously popular in tributes to Prince Philip – that he was some kind of frustrated comedian. We have all by now been reminded of his famous remarks: telling the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was wearing national dress, "You look like you're ready for bed"; or advising British students in China not to stay too long or they would end up with "slitty eyes". A Black British, Cambridge-educated friend of mine received a classic Prince Philip "compliment" when she met him: "You speak English beautifully!" he said.

25 In the past few days we've heard numerous euphemisms deployed to cover these outbursts without calling them what they were. "His 'gaffes' were typical of the clubbish humour of the officer class." He was "politically incorrect", and "blunt". Nobody likes to speak ill of the dead, but these are not excuses for Philip so much as alibis for British commentators, desperate to avoid confronting the real legacy of British imperial expansion: racism. A dirty word that inconveniently undermines the glorious narrative the royals still help project. The colonisation of "lesser peoples" was by definition a project of white supremacy, and one personified by the royal family at the head of the empire: of course he made racist jokes. If calling Prince Philip "a man of his time" is an admission that the royals exist in something of a time capsule, then I have to agree. The institution is, as the experience of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex has made clear, outdated. Both Meghan's presence and the racist press treatment to which she was subjected offered the monarchy a unique opportunity to embrace a woman of African heritage, acknowledge its complicated relationship with this heritage in the past, and at least appear committed to a new era of equality. It could not have failed the test more dramatically.

30 Meanwhile, Britain's honours system continues to glorify the pain felt by survivors of colonialism and their descendants. This system – which, two generations on from Prince Philip is still being actively promoted – rewards British people for their achievements on remarkable terms. It asks us to aspire to see ourselves as "Members", "Officers" or even "Commanders" of the British Empire – a painful act of betrayal to our histories.

35 For those who object to projecting this painful history on to a single, recently deceased old man, this is the very problem with the concept of monarchy. Of course there is an individual analysis, in which Prince Philip was a fascinating historical actor whose passing points towards the end of an era. His childhood was shaped by the collapse of the Ottoman empire. His body carried the genetic memory of the Bolshevik revolution and its fatal consequences for the Romanovs: in 1993, his DNA was used to identify their remains.

40 Philip's marriage to the Queen is a legacy of Queen Victoria's project to unite Europe through dynastic marriages, based on a deep appreciation of the need for peace on the continent. It's a virtuous ideal with much to offer the very same people most noisily prostrating themselves before the royals, if they actually cared to learn.

**Brixton was where the spark was lit: how the riots changed black politics in UK** by Alex Mistlin

*For Labour politicians including Diane Abbott and Paul Boateng, the unrest meant black Britain could no longer be ignored*

11 Apr 2021 *The Guardian*

“Without the uprising in Brixton you wouldn’t have had black people elected to parliament in 1987,” says the Labour MP Diane Abbott. “Those uprisings made politics pay attention to black representation, particularly on the left where people tended to focus on class and thought talking about race was a distraction.”

5 After the 1981 Brixton uprising, which caused 279 injuries to police and £7.5m-worth of damage in the form of burned vehicles and buildings, the voice of black Britain could no longer be ignored.

Alongside her black and Asian colleagues Bernie Grant, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz, Abbott’s election marked a significant moment in black British history. But Abbott knew she was entering a hostile environment, not least because her own party saw the bold young candidates as “an embarrassment”.

10 “If you tried to talk about racial justice in the early 80s you were just dismissed by those on the right of politics, even on the right of the Labour party, as someone with a chip on their shoulder,” she says.

Boateng, now a Labour peer, echoes this sentiment, noting how the party’s antipathy was emblematic of British attitudes at the time. “Britain had not come to terms with the fact that it was a multiracial society. There were many in Britain who somehow believed it was all a nightmare and one day they would wake up and we would be gone.”

15 Before 1981, politics largely dealt with the growing number of ethnic minorities as part of a “migrant problem” that could only be solved by keeping numbers to an absolute minimum. In 1978, the then Conservative leader, Margaret Thatcher, claimed in an interview for ITV’s *World in Action* that British people feared being “swamped” by immigrants from Pakistan and the rest of the “new Commonwealth”.

Before entering parliament, Lord Boateng was a lawyer and activist in nearby Loughborough Junction who cut his teeth as a legal adviser to the “Scrap Sus” campaign in the late 1970s.

20 Police relied heavily on the “sus law” – which allowed them to stop, search and potentially arrest people purely on suspicion of breaking the law – during Operation Swamp 81. Within five days, 943 people had been stopped and searched, with 82 arrested.

“The campaign was symptomatic of a sense of deep and abiding injustice that was felt, not just among black youth, but right across the inner cities. But Brixton was the historic centre of the black population and that’s where the spark was lit,” says Boateng. He recalls watching the uprising unfold. “You could smell the smoke [coming from Brixton] and you just knew things weren’t ever going to be the same again.”

For all the progress of the last 40 years – Abbott and Boateng are both clear about how much has changed for the better – there is still significant scepticism towards the government’s commitment to tackling racial disparities.

30 “The fact that this government went to such trouble to construct a commission on racial disparities, which was really about pushing back on the notion of institutional racism, shows they still don’t take it particularly seriously,” says Abbott. “Tony Sewell’s commission wants to take the race debate back to where it was in the early 80s.”

Indeed, Britain’s race debate bears a similarity with 1981. The government’s Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities was set up after a summer of protest in the wake of George Floyd’s death. After Brixton came the Scarman report, the first in Britain to acknowledge “racial disadvantage”, although it too denied that “institutional racism” was widespread in British society.

35 “The political system did what it always does in those circumstances: it appointed an inquiry. That’s what you do when there’s no other option,” says Boateng.

In February this year, the Stuart Hall Foundation published its own race report that revealed 589 different recommendations were made by 13 previous race reports and commissions between 1981 and 2017 – the vast majority of which have not been implemented.

40 Last year, David Lammy, Grant’s successor in the Tottenham constituency in north London and as a campaigner for racial equality in parliament, captured the frustration of many critics, angrily telling the government to stop prevaricating and implement existing recommendations with the words: “Get on with the action. Legislate. Move. You’re in government – do something.”

45 Boateng laments the UK political system’s failure to adequately address issues of race and structural disadvantage. “There’s still a strong element of denial and avoidance, and we see that in the most recent contortions of the current government,” he says.

“I want to build on the gains that have been made over these past 40 years, not see them disparaged and dissipated. In 1981 circumstances demanded change and to a certain extent things did, but not enough, and the struggle continues.”

**Brexit 'should prompt UK to rethink attitude to Indigenous artefacts'**, by Josh Halliday  
*Australian repatriation project calls for 'significant shift' in approach to returning sacred items*

3 August 2020. *The Guardian*

5 Britain's departure from the EU and the renewed focus on empire should prompt a "significant shift" in its approach to returning sacred artefacts to Indigenous communities, the head of an Australian government-funded project has said. More than 33.000 items of Indigenous Australian heritage are held in UK museums, including some believed to have been stolen during or shortly after Captain James Cook's first voyage to Australia 250 years ago.

10 Manchester Museum became the first UK institution to return some of these objects in a powerful handover ceremony in November. Yet despite a growing restitution movement, many leading British museums have appeared reluctant to hand over sacred artefacts because of concerns about the wider implications for their collections.

15 Craig Ritchie, who runs what is believed to be one of the world's biggest repatriation projects, said Brexit and the renewed focus on Britain's imperial history represented a powerful moment to reassess the UK's relationship with Indigenous Australians so that it "isn't just one where we happen to share a monarch and isn't just one where we are interested in trade deals".

20 He said: "If it's true that Brexit is more than simply getting out of some kind of political union with Europe and is, in fact, an expression of the UK trying to rethink its place in the world independent of Europe, then part of that is the opportunity to rethink and recalibrate the relationship between the UK and its former colonial dominions and ... the indigenous people in those former colonies".

25 Ritchie is head of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Aiatsis), which is funded by the Australian government and has identified more than 100.000 sacred artefacts and cultural material in institutions around the world, of which a third are in the UK.

30 Although Aiatsis hopes to return as many artefacts as it can, Ritchie said: "Not everything will come home and probably not everything should." adding that it was willing to explore alternative arrangements with UK institutions.

35 However, he said the final resting place of the objects was "a decision that should be made by the community of origin rather than just a recalcitrant white institution that's refusing to give stuff back".

40 The Pitt Rivers Museum, which displays the University of Oxford's archaeological and anthropological items, has the biggest collection of this material in the UK with about 16.000 pieces. The museum works with Aiatsis to help understand the material and is known for engaging with indigenous peoples.

45 Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology has the UK's second largest collection of indigenous items, with about 3.000 artefacts, and the British Museum is believed to have about 2.900 in its collection. Ritchie said the institute's discussions with the British Museum, which has previously been reluctant to permanently return relics to Australia, were going to be "a longer process" and that it would have to "step our way through what could easily become quite a minefield of politics and tricky questions".

50 The then culture secretary, Jeremy Wright, last year ruled out any change in the law to allow national museums to return objects to their countries of origin. Arts Council England is due to publish updated guidance this year on the repatriation of cultural objects, superseding existing guidance produced by the defunct Museums and Galleries Commission in 2000. Of the 38 UK institutions that responded to an Aiatsis survey two years ago, 17 said they were willing to consider a return request and most said they were happy to share information about their collections.

Ritchie said the confluence of events surrounding Brexit, the renewed focus on Britain's colonial legacy, and the successful repatriation by Manchester Museum would herald a significant shift in the approach of many UK institutions.

## **It's fruitless to debate the culture-war confections of the rightwing press,** by Nesrine Malik

14 June 2021. *The Guardian*

5 Earlier this month, MailOnline brought us another dispatch from the colonised towns of the UK. Muslims, we were told, had turned several towns into "no-go areas" for white people. Less than a month before, one of those particular areas – Didsbury, in Manchester – had been described by the very same newspaper website as a "posh and leafy suburb", a popular "hotspot" for homebuyers. If you are wondering which story to believe, then perhaps I can help by telling you that the no-go areas story, long and detailed as it was, was not based on original reporting, but on a book by an ex-Islamist in which he makes several controversial claims that support his thesis of a divided Britain.

10 Some suggested that perhaps this laughable portrayal wouldn't have slipped through if MailOnline had had greater geographical diversity among its reporters. Reporting from the ground is, of course, the only way to get at the truth. But where does reporting get you if the story you're investigating is based on a preconceived view of the world?

15 There is a saying popular among journalists criticising false balance in the media: "If someone says it's raining, and another person says it's dry, it's not your job to quote them both. Your job is to look out of the window and find out which is true." As sound as the logic of that statement is, it still doesn't quite cover the scale of the problem when it comes to our information ecosystem. The media are often not the impartial observers that this scenario assumes. Sometimes, the journalist looks out of the window, finds that it is dry, but ends up giving the impression that it is raining anyway.

20 There are certain stories that are teased into headlines based on exaggeration and a loose relationship with the facts. In another example of narrative-first journalism, we were told last week on a newspaper front page, that there was a clamour to "axe" the Queen herself because some Oxford students in a common room had taken her picture down. The story that should catch our eye here is not what Oxford students did or did not do, but the machine that continues to churn out such inflammatory interpretations.

It's a claim that put baldly can sound too vast and conspiratorial to be credible, but there are some parts of the British press that, for a long time, have not simply reported the news, but done their bit to create it, so that it conforms to a pre-existing narrative.

25 It is not the first time that claims about "no-go areas" or unpatriotic students have been made by the press. It's hard to escape the idea that the purveyors of such stories have an interest, both ideological and commercial, in convincing the public that Muslims are patrolling Britain's streets and young people are on a campaign to erase British traditions via its most treasured symbols.

30 But we continue to make the mistake of engagement: of either taking these accounts at face value, or becoming embroiled in fact-checking them. Cornered on LBC last week, Andy Burnham, the mayor of Greater Manchester, reflexively defended the Queen against her "cancellation", without pausing to think or question the source. He delivered perfectly the sort of line that these stories are meant to embed in the public's mind: "These kinds of gestures are getting a bit out of hand. We all should respect the Queen." The gestures are "divisive" he added. On Muslim-dominated no-go areas, I have already had one invite from a prestigious BBC programme to discuss this allegation, and others, with the author of the book on which MailOnline's extensive article was based.

35 This is how we become numb to the extent of the distortion, and its dangers. Once the account is made respectable by publication and then discussion, it passes into the realm of "difficult truths" that must be addressed. It puts on a different, more respectable shirt. The no-go areas tale become not a perennial story that the papers have been pushing for years, it becomes a "row", a "controversy", a "debate". Something spontaneous and organic, rather than manufactured and recycled.

40 This is also how these narratives are shorn of the motivation behind them, which makes them harder to challenge. The frequency and spuriousness of the allegations against Muslims often amounts to defamation. Last year, the Times, Telegraph, Mail and Express all had to pay libel damages and publish apologies to a Muslim Scout leader for false extremism allegations. The Times separately paid and apologised to a Muslim advocacy group for defamation. And these are just cases that I have the space to mention and whose victims had the stomach to sue. Is it any wonder, then, that something like a third of British people believe in the no-go areas myth, that Islamophobia has replaced immigration in fuelling far-right movements in the UK, that the Conservative party's anti-Muslim prejudice stirs not a hair on the public's head? Some journalists in those very papers are beginning to tire of the intensity of conflict over race, gender, language and history, but still fail to make the connection with real-life consequences. That there is a high incidence of hate crime against Muslims is entirely to be expected, or, if one takes a look at the deluge of hostile false allegations in the press against anti-racism movements, it's not surprising that people are booing footballers taking the knee.

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**The Tories have worked out how to pull off an NHS data grab: do it during a pandemic.** by Marina Hyde  
4 June 2021. *The Guardian*

5 Eight years ago the government had a plan so good it couldn't tell you about it. It wanted to scrape everyone in England's entire GP records and put them on one central database, where they would be anonymised – well, sort of! – then made available for research purposes to third parties, including private corporations. And called it Care.data, which is precisely the sort of name you'd give to either (a) a plan to grab everyone's health data and let commercial firms like Google use it without their explicit consent, or (b) a desktop folder with pictures of everyone in your workplace using the second-floor toilets. But it's OK, because you don't show their heads. You set the camera up so it's just neck-down.

10 Naturally, this stuff is worth a fortune to private corporations. We're back on the data now, not the notional pictures of everyone in your workplace on the loo. Which is a shame, in a way, because the data is arguably a whole lot more personal, spanning everything from mental and sexual health, abuse, criminal records, ethnicity, gender, drug and alcohol history ... you get it. Anyway, Care.data failed, because a ragtag band of privacy campaigners, worried doctors and MPs like David Davis campaigned their arses off, meaning that there was public debate and enough people learned about it in time to opt out. Post its collapse, the Care.data plan was described by one statistics professor as "disastrously incompetent – both ethically and technically". Which sounds like the sort of review Mary Berry would give on Bake Off to a roulade made entirely of human ears, but which arguably has even wider implications.

20 And hey, the government learned its lesson. Which is to say that eight years on – literally right now – it's doing the same thing, only in less time, without a public awareness campaign, with a trickier opt-out, and in the middle of a global pandemic. Have you, at some level, got to admire the work?

25 SPOILER: no. Hand on heart, it's difficult to summon anything other than deep suspicion, born of bitter experience, about the fact that NHS Digital has barely informed GPs, waiting till the last minute to order them to submit the records of every patient under their care, where they will become a permanent and irreversible part of the new database. Neither the British Medical Association nor the Royal College of GPs have endorsed this process. Patients have until 23 June to opt out, and most don't even know about it.

30 Once again, a ragtag band of privacy campaigners, concerned doctors and David Davis MP are mounting a rearguard action, with legal threats sent to the government today.

35 Why are experts so worried, then, when Matt Hancock and friends only want to heal the world? Before we even answer that, do be aware that there is ALREADY a safe, secure way for researchers to access genuinely anonymised data on Covid – the Trusted Research Environment. The data NHS Digital will store is pseudonymised, and it says it'll only be shared with commercial third parties for "research and planning purposes". But it would be relatively simple to re-identify that data – particularly for those with cross-referencing access to other databases, to say nothing of the risk of the third-party breaches it opens up. According to the very much un-promoted page on the NHS website, the NHS will be able to unlock the pseudonymisation codes "in certain circumstances, and where there is a valid legal reason". (You might assume they've called the new data grab Honestlywhat'stheworstthatcouldhappen.data, but instead they've gone with GDPR.)

40 As for why they're effectively rebooting a failed plan now, with GPs already drowning in a backlog of pandemic-delayed care, it does feel like the perfect moment for the famously competent department of health to do a teeny-tiny thing they in no way need cover for.

45 In fact, this approach is really now so endemic in Boris Johnson's government that it must be regarded as the official playbook: withholding vital information from the public, transparency-free procurement, secretive contracts, a pathological aversion to any kind of scrutiny – then telling anyone that finds out about it that it's in their best interests and that they absolutely refuse to apologise for that. After the past 14 months, it would take a very big database indeed to store all the things for which the government absolutely refuses to apologise. Should you feel you'd like to opt out, if only to buy time and transparency, here's where to go. If there's nothing for us to worry our pretty little heads about, perhaps the government would at least do us the courtesy of openly explaining why.

**Whatever Johnson's 'levelling up' means, it isn't about Britain's shocking poverty levels.** by Polly Toynbee  
28 May 2021. *The Guardian*

Rattling through a lexicon of lies at prime minister's questions is so routine that few bother to call out Boris Johnson any more. Besides, on Wednesday all attention was on the vendetta playing out elsewhere in Westminster. But when the Labour MP Gareth Thomas challenged the prime minister on the steep rise in child poverty revealed in official figures this week – 4.3 million children and heading upwards on a steep curve – Johnson boasted shamelessly: "We are seeing fewer households now with children in poverty than 10 years ago."

Thomas protested at "Boris Johnson's casual disregard for the truth". But lies seem to work very well for him, and they're eagerly echoed as fact by those on the Tory benches.

Here's what the Office for National Statistics finds: in 2010 there were 3.6 million children living below the poverty line – and now there are 4.3 million, with 200,000 more since last year. Nothing in the Treasury's meagre spending plans at the budget suggests child poverty will stop rising. Raw numbers may bore people, so Johnson relies on voters hearing his upbeat promises without bothering with the small print. One loud assertion that there are fewer poor children travels faster than fact-checkers trying to sweep up behind him.

Since the government relies on confusion to obfuscate, the rest of us need to keep a grip on reality. The universally used measure of poverty, in Britain and internationally, is relative, counting anyone living below 60% of a country's median income. Important to note it's not below average income, because by definition, some are always below average. But the median is the mid-point, where half the population earns above and half below.

For obvious reasons, the government grasps on to a different measure called "absolute poverty". Here's the oddity of this number: it is anchored in 2010, so it measures how many children are still living on what was the 60% below-median level 11 years ago, when the median was of course far lower, as it rises with growth. Even using their absurd "absolute poverty" measure, when counting incomes before housing costs there are still 100,000 more poor children. Here's an even more alarming fact in the new official figures, highlighted by the Child Poverty Action Group: many more children are falling into far deeper poverty, so 2.9 million children live on less than 50% of the median. That is 600,000 more kids plunged into those depths since 2010 – 1.7 million of them regularly hungry.

We live in a country where a third of children are poor – really poor – relative to the country's ordinary living standards, but the government doesn't think enough people truly care for it to matter politically. The dismal recent Ipsos Mori poll for King's College London revealed that many people blamed poor people for their misfortune. Even mid-pandemic, as unemployment rose, nearly half the population thought those losing their jobs were to blame because of their own poor performance at work – only 31% said it was bad luck.

Despite all the evidence, people are determined to believe we live in a meritocracy, where success comes from hard work and ambition. Pity for those on low incomes is waning – and this a severe problem for Labour, whose members and activists are so strongly motivated by concern for the underdog. Reams of reports pour out of thinktanks, universities and campaign groups describing lives spent in poverty on the bottom rungs of society – but to no obvious avail. This week's figures show, yet again, that poverty is primarily caused by pitiful wages: 75% of poor children are now in working families: poor despite striving and toiling, full of "merit", "hard work" and "ambition".

It takes hero footballer Marcus Rashford spelling out what it's like to be a hungry child to shake off that public complacency. The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, will undoubtedly make permanent the £20 added to universal credit in the pandemic, with a fanfare of fake generosity, but it doesn't begin to restore George Osborne's savage £37bn benefit cuts. Johnson added this boast to his reply on poverty at prime minister's questions: "We are levelling up across the country with the biggest investment for a generation." That's a vacant IOU, for which there is no day-to-day cash on the table. One growth industry in the north-east over the past five years has been in child poverty, up by a third in five years, and now the UK's second highest. Fixing that takes national action on wages and benefits. Expect capital spending on a few eye-catching northern projects with salutes to some star industry openings. But remember, Treasury austerity is imposing yet another 8% cut on councils in the north, as everywhere, meaning fewer jobs and worse services with cuts to most government departments too.

What is so-called levelling up when London has the highest poverty per capita? The tyranny of averages makes London streets appear paved with gold, as City incomes disguise the country's deepest deprivation, hiding in borough after borough. But as there are no Tory target seats in the capital (they may lose London suburbs), a Labour mayor can expect no favours from the Treasury.

## Calling on white Americans: Reparations for slavery are due

By David Gardinier and Karen Hilfman, August 17, 2020, *The Boston Globe*

Since the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis by a white police officer, and the resounding anti-racist uprisings around the world, the concept of reparations has picked up momentum in national conversations and has sparked new public curiosity and interest. Among Black people and their ancestors, however, reparations for slavery have been on their hearts and minds for a very long time. True Black history, which few white people — including us — learned in school, points to numerous calls for reparations for Black Americans, such as efforts centered on the passage of bills in Congress.

In 1989, the late Representative John Conyers of Michigan introduced a bill calling for a commission to study reparations for the first time, and again in every subsequent legislative session until he retired, in 2018. The current bill was introduced in the House by Representative Sheila Jackson Lee of Texas and has 143 cosponsors.

It would establish a commission to examine slavery and discrimination from colonial times through the present and “recommend appropriate remedies.” For the first time, a companion bill was introduced in the Senate, championed by Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey. In 2014, the call for reparations was brought into wider public circulation when *The Atlantic* published Ta-Nehisi Coates’s seminal article “The Case for Reparations.” In this influential piece, Coates deftly and exquisitely lays bare, for a predominantly white, liberal audience, how America’s enslavement of Black people resulted in structures intended to create systemic racial disparities in housing, wages, lending, voting, and more. A debt is owed.

Even after all these years and excruciating efforts, our country still has never managed to atone for the brutal devastation that began in 1619, when enslaved Africans were brought to Jamestown, Va. The legacy of slavery is far from resolved. It persists every day and everywhere, as evidenced by income and wealth inequality, disparate living conditions and health outcomes, police brutality and mass incarceration, and the overall white supremacist system that treats white and Black lives in vastly different ways. The other side of this history, the part that was rarely told, is that the wealth generated from all that “free” enslaved labor, combined with the theft of land from indigenous peoples, is what placed white Americans solidly among the wealthiest people on earth today.

That truth was laid bare in a 2016 book by 16 scholars, *Slavery’s Capitalism: A New History of American Economic Development*, which names slavery as the bedrock of the American economic system. Though we Whites alive today didn’t do the dirty work it took to create this wealth and privilege based on skin color, we live with the consequences of it. And those consequences go much deeper than we often realize.

What follows next in this American story of theft, murder, and profound mistreatment of Black people, and the ongoing legacy of slavery, is up to all of us. We’ve had 400 years of opportunity to make amends and set things right, and Black people have endured 400 years of waiting for America to do just that. As Americans who long for a more enlightened narrative on race than the one we’ve had so far, we formed a collective with like-minded white people called the Fund for Reparations NOW!, which works in solidarity with the National African American Reparations Commission. Following the Black leadership of NAARC, our fund is a nonprofit philanthropic venture seeking to further the racial healing of America through the expedited implementation of NAARC’s 10-point reparations plan. [...]

Our ultimate goal is to see the federal government formally apologize and pay reparations to Black people. It’s time for members of Congress to hear from white people too and urge lawmakers to support reparations. Until legislation passes, we have committed to doing what our white ancestors never did: Acknowledge the deep violations committed and pay reparations for those violations. We have no illusions that apologizing will fully mitigate the offenses this country has committed, or that any amount of money could compensate for the unconscionable loss of human life, rights, opportunity, justice, and freedom Black Americans have experienced. Even still, we believe for the sake of the United States and its ideals, and for people who have suffered far too long, our American story of race must change. Those of us who commit to the reparations’ movement are taking a clear step to say we will do the work to make that happen, and we are inviting others to join us on this journey for justice, restitution, healing, and reconciliation.

*David Gardinier founded the Fund for Reparations NOW! Karen Hilfman is a founding member of White People for Black Lives and a board member of FFRN!*

## Trumpism without Trump?

By Victor Davis Hanson, *The National Review*, March 4, 2021

5 Six weeks ago, Americans were assured that Donald Trump had left the presidency disgraced and forever ruined politically. Trump was the first president to be impeached twice, and the first to be tried as a private citizen when out of office. He was the first to be impeached without the chief justice of the United States presiding over his trial. His nonstop complaining about a stolen “landslide” election was blamed by many as a distraction that led to the loss of two Republican Senate seats from Georgia. The current Democratic-majority Congress was the result.

10 Americans were assured by Trump’s impeachment prosecutors and the media that the January 6 Capitol assault was his fault alone. So Trump was condemned as a veritable murderer, responsible for five deaths at the Capitol. Many of his own advisers and cabinet members had loudly resigned in disgust. Yet six weeks after leaving office, a Phoenix-like Trump brought a crowd at the annual Conservative Political Action Conference to its feet. His 90-minute blistering broadside against Joe Biden’s radical first 40 days of executive orders and hard-left appointments enthused thousands. Polls show that while he has lost some support in his party, Trump still wins 75 percent approval in the GOP.

15 So why is a supposedly once-toxic Trump apparently back at center stage? The infamous Capitol riot is still under investigation. Elements of the media narrative of an “armed insurrection” that led to the alleged murder of officer Brian Sicknick are being debunked and quietly retracted. Many Americans disapproved of an outgoing president holding a massive rally about alleged voter fraud in a highly polarized climate. But evidence has not yet suggested — as the media once insisted — that Sicknick was assaulted and murdered by a rioter. One of the four protesters lost in or near that melee died through violence. She was an unarmed female military veteran shot while unlawfully breaking into the Capitol by a still-unnamed police officer. So far, no one arrested inside the Capitol has been charged with either carrying or using a firearm. The “armed insurrection” turns out to have been more of a leaderless, thuggish mob riot “incited” by no one in particular. For all the national outrage at Trump, 95 percent of Republican House members voted against his impeachment. Eighty-six percent of Republican senators voted to acquit him of impeachment charges. Biden so far has not turned out to be the “good old Joe from Scranton” moderate healer of media and Never Trump fantasies. Instead, his executive orders and appointments are the most radical and polarizing of any recent president. Getting kicked off social media by Silicon Valley moguls ironically turned out to be a plus for Trump. His once-controversial tweets and posts no longer distract from Biden’s frequent displays of ineptitude. And in the lull, attention has turned to Trump’s fiercest critics — especially Governors Andrew Cuomo of New York and Gavin Newsom of California. Both are now mired in scandal, and Newsom is likely facing a recall election.

20 Ever so slowly, the image of the now-muted ex-president is transforming from former bad-boy bully to current bullied private citizen. In addition, the 74-year-old ex-president acted like he was just 60 at the CPAC event. The 78-year-old Biden increasingly appears bewildered — and more like he is in his 80s. The current detention of undocumented minors at the border and the presidential orders to bomb in Syria remind voters that Biden is doing exactly what the now-silent media used to blast Trump for doing. A Biden-created border crisis, climbing gas prices, and renewed aggression from China suggest that the “Make American Great Again” agenda may be missed after a little more than a month of reset.

25 The United States leads the world in COVID-19 vaccinations, in part because Trump wisely hedged bets by enlisting and often subsidizing several companies. Right after the Capitol riot, there was talk in Republican Party circles about building upon the successful MAGA agenda — but by engineering a Trump transition to a senior-statesman role. Insiders think that impressive possible 2024 presidential candidates such as Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis, South Dakota’s Governor Kristi Noem, Senator Tom Cotton (R., Ark.), former secretary of state Mike Pompeo, and others might better advance the popular MAGA cause — with the endorsement of Trump himself. The new standard-bearer supposedly would lack Trump’s off-putting manner that alienated swing voters. That may happen. But for now, no one knows whether Trump’s ability to cut through left-wing platitudes revs up more to vote than it does to turn off others. Events have radically turned political realities upside down in just six weeks. We should expect far more volatility in the next four years. Party insiders may dream of Trumpism without Trump, fearing that he could never win a majority of voters. They may be right. But then again, who has been right about Donald Trump’s final demise in the past five years?

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**President Trump's '1776 Commission' on Patriotic Education is an Overdue Effort**  
The Editors, *The National Review*, September 21, 2020

America's proud history is worth defending, and it is worth defending through government and politics. There are fair arguments about how best to go about that task consistently with a duly conservative skepticism about the proper powers of federal and local government, but conservatives should not shy away from conserving the core of our national history, ideals, and culture — a goal that not so long ago was neither partisan nor ideological.

5 The current lines of battle are joined around the teaching of the *New York Times* 1619 Project, Howard Zinn's 1980 screed *A People's History of the United States*, and other fact-challenged efforts to supplant the story of America, its ideals, and its exceptional history with critical-race and gender theory and leftist agitprop. It is wrong to fill the heads of children with falsehoods, or to subject them to outside-the-mainstream theories until they are old enough to learn to evaluate them critically. It is right and important to commemorate what makes  
10 this nation great and special. Control of public-school curricula is properly a local matter, but presidents can provide moral leadership, start national conversations, and raise alarms in this area. So long as there is a federal Department of Education with its hands in school curricula, its actions, too, should aim to be constructive rather than destructive. A proper American history does not mean feeding children Parson Weems's whitewashed just-so stories. It is, rather, what Ronald Reagan called for in his Farewell Address in 1989, an "informed patriotism":  
15 An informed patriotism is what we want. And are we doing a good enough job teaching our children what America is and what she represents in the long history of the world? ... We've got to do a better job of getting across that America is freedom — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of enterprise. And freedom is special and rare. It's fragile... Let's start with some basics: more attention to American history and a greater emphasis on civic ritual.

20 It is to preserve that history and civic ritual that the Trump administration has announced a "1776 Commission" to promote patriotic education. The commission, at least as presently envisioned, will not dictate anything to anyone. There is precedent for such a commission. In 1973, Congress created the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, which oversaw the pageantry of public patriotic events in 1976. The Statue of Liberty–Ellis Island Centennial Commission performed a similar function in 1986 for the symbols of America's  
25 immigrant roots. The national Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution in 1987, chaired by Chief Justice Warren Burger, partnered with the Smithsonian, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Bar Association, the National Park Service, and the Daughters of the American Revolution to educate Americans on the history and blessings of our national charter. How President Trump plans to fund the commission's work without Congress may be another story. The cultural Left has often openly  
30 extorted private corporations into funding its propaganda, whether or not that extortion takes the form of government power. Trump claims that his approval of a new deal between TikTok, Walmart, and Oracle is conditioned on \$5 billion directed by the companies towards a patriotic-education foundation. It does not appear that this would fund the presidential commission directly, but while the cause is a good one, the government should not be in the business of conditioning regulatory approvals on the creation of slush funds for cultural  
35 causes.

We are likewise skeptical of federal efforts to ban schools from teaching the 1619 Project or other particular books or courses of study. This is not the proper role of Washington. Where federal funding is being used to finance leftist propaganda, the better solution should be to eliminate that funding or redirect it to parents to control.

40 Informed patriotic education was once seen as a necessary component of citizenship. No prior generation of American leaders would have argued that we should be indifferent to whether our citizens know their own history and the Founding ideals on which the nation rests. Abraham Lincoln returned often to the unique history of America, not only to hold together the nation in crisis but to call it to its highest ideals. Calvin Coolidge, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, argued: Our forefathers came to certain  
45 conclusions and decided upon certain courses of action which have been a great blessing to the world. Before we can understand their conclusions, we must go back and review the course which they followed. We must think the thoughts which they thought... If we are to maintain the great heritage which has been bequeathed to us, we must be like-minded as the fathers who created it.

Parents, of course, should be the first teachers of patriotism and the reasons why we love America and its history.  
50 So long as children are educated by the government, however, what they are taught will also be a political issue. Conservatives are overdue to enter that essential fight. We applaud the president for doing so.

**Lighten up, you doubters. Britons still have the power to lead — and electrify.** by Andrew Marr

November 29 2020, *The Sunday Times*

Nations, just as much as individual people, can lose their self-confidence. From the merciless shredding of the royal family's reputation in *The Crown* to the agonisingly difficult endgame in the EU trade talks and stern lectures on national decline by elder statesmen, something like that may be happening to Britain now.

If so, it is partly because Brexit has distorted normal political debate. The more the naturally ebullient prime minister and his most ardent Brexiteer friends proclaim our hugely prosperous, world-beating, global-power status, the more clearly the sceptics have a vision of a self-destructive country corkscrewing into poverty, humiliation and oblivion.

Each side trades its statistics in an increasingly hysterical tone. Look at how many Nobel prizes per head we have, and our spending on science during Covid-19. Yes, but look at our terrible death rates by international comparison — the world's fifth-largest exporter by gross domestic product (GDP). Yes, but look at how we're losing ground by other yardsticks: and what's happening to GDP per head: and the percentage of the population in poverty. Yes, but. Yes, but. Yes, but.

In the midst of this clatter, a calm assessment of where we are begins to feel impossible. And that should worry us, because, historically, nations that lose their self-confidence or sense of worth turn in on themselves.

Unless they have been comprehensively defeated in war, countries rarely blame other countries for their misfortunes: it is all the fault of the traitors and conceited idiots inside their borders. Poison begins to circulate. Tribes coagulate. The rhetoric becomes hotter, the mood more feverish. Recent events in America remind us what it feels like a little bit further down that slippery path.

In trying for perspective, history helps. In preparing a book and television programmes about changing British attitudes during the Queen's reign, I read my way through *The Times* for the months around the start of the story — her arrival back from Kenya after her father's death in 1952. We tend to look back on the 1950s as something of a calming, reassuring, even golden age. This proved a salutary read. [...]

In telling the story of Britons during the reign of Elizabeth II — I think we can reasonably call ourselves Elizabethans — I found two really big national projects. The first, mostly (but not exclusively) of the left, was to build the world's most generous and successful welfare society. The second, mostly (but not exclusively) of the right, was to replace the empire with a truly potent new global role for the UK. Both these grand projects failed. Why? Because during this period we never quite earned for ourselves the wealth or the status we thought we deserved.

Put like that, it is a fairly straightforward story of decline. And yet the strange thing is, the minute you investigate the individual stories of Elizabethan change-makers, decline is the last word that seems appropriate. It is a narrative of restless innovation, social change and remarkably swift adaptation to a new world.

These include the stories of extraordinarily successful and determined inventors, from the origins of modern computing to the Sinclair miniaturisation revolution, from Cockerell and the hovercraft to Dyson and pioneers of the computer gaming industry.

There is the strange, mysterious arrival of British cool. Back in the early part of the Queen's reign, we knew ourselves to be terminally unfashionable — badly dressed, stuffy, defiantly dowdy; a people of bad teeth, worse breath, creased flannel clothes and unimaginative haircuts. Then came the Beatles and the Stones, David Bailey, Mary Quant. Later, David Bowie, Vivienne Westwood, Paul Smith, Terence Conran, David Hockney, Tracey Emin, Damien Hirst, Richard Rogers, Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Naomi Campbell, Kate Moss. Look at us now, with Coldplay, Stormzy and Adele, David Beckham and Lewis Hamilton, Michaela Coel, Phoebe Waller-Bridge taking *Fleabag* to Broadway and Olivia Colman swanning off with an Oscar. Jason Statham even.

As heavy industry slides away, cultural and soft power rises up. The City erupts. Britain moves from being a post-war sideshow to being a throbbing centre of innovation.

Then there are the big changes in public ethics. Think of the enthusiasm for ethical capitalism — all those banks, clothing manufacturers and food companies selling themselves on the basis of avoiding cheap labour, environmental degradation and animal cruelty. It is a shift you can see all around the world. But where did that really start? It really began thanks to the impatient child of Italian immigrants, on a back street in Brighton, where Anita Roddick opened her first Body Shop.

Certainly, it is hard to put numbers on soft power, but you know it when you see it. We no longer have the vast, ocean-straddling Royal Navy that greeted the Queen at the coronation fleet review at Spithead, Hampshire, in 1953. I'm not sure what we would do with all those naval guns and battlecruisers if we did still have them. But we have found new ways of exercising influence, which frankly seem more relevant and useful now.

*New Elizabethans* starts on BBC2 at 9pm on Thursday. *Elizabethans: How Modern Britain Was Forged* is out now (William Collins, £20)

## **No, Georgia's new voting law is not a return to Jim Crow**

By Henry Olsen, *The Washington Post*, March 30 2021.

Democrats have been tarnishing Georgia's new voting law, saying it represents a return to Jim Crow. That calumny besmirches an effort that largely succeeds at balancing extensive voter access with strong election integrity.

5 Jim Crow was a heinous system that systematically denied Black Americans — and many poor Whites — their constitutional right to vote through bogus “literacy tests,” poll taxes and other measures such as “Whites only” Democratic primaries in states where Democrats were sure to win. Backed by racist law enforcement and threats of violence or lynching by the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups, even Black people who were able to vote often chose not to. It took the civil rights revolution, and especially the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to undo this system.

10 The new Georgia law does nothing to return the state to this terrible time. Black voters will still be able to register without hindrance. And they, like all other Georgians, will be able to vote in many different ways: on Election Day, in-person before Election Day, or by mail without an excuse if they are 65 or older. Democrats charge that some of the law's provisions will have a differential impact on Black voting and thus demonstrate prejudicial intent. These provisions include requirements that voters present a photo ID when voting in person; that those voting by mail provide their driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security number; and that in-person voting on Sundays are now a county option rather than a statewide mandate. None of these provisions should prevent anyone from voting, and many are popular even among Black voters.

20 Photo identification is a case in point. Democrats have long resisted the requirement on the theory that some voters without driver's licenses or other state-issued IDs could be disenfranchised. But as progressive elections analyst Ruy Teixeira points out, studies regularly show that photo ID requirements have not reduced turnout. Georgia's law also permits voters to ask for a free voter-ID card if they don't have one of the six permitted forms of photo ID. A recent poll conducted for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* also found that 74 percent of Georgians support a photo-ID requirement for voting, including 63 percent of Black respondents. Democrats' objections are an answer in search of a problem. The new mail-in ballot measures are also not likely to depress turnout. Black voters already prefer to vote in person, either early or on Election Day. Seventy percent say they voted in-person in the 2020 presidential election according to the AJC poll. Moreover, the law's new security measure, which replaces the old system of using a person's signature to verify absentee ballots with a requirement that absentee voters provide a driver's license or state ID card, will likely decrease the chance that valid ballots are wrongly rejected. That's a good thing that everyone should cheer. [...]

30 The changes to Sunday early voting will also not likely have any effect. Despite Democratic claims that Georgia's after-church “souls to the polls” early voting initiatives drove turnout, data from the 2020 presidential election and the Jan. 5 Senate runoffs showed that Sundays were the least popular days to vote in both races. In the runoff, more than 174,000 people voted on each weekday of early voting, but only 31,000 people voted on Sunday, Dec. 20, and only about 20,000 voted the following Sunday. Sundays were also the lightest voting day of the week in the November presidential election as well. Georgia's new law also mandates an extra Saturday of early voting and allows counties the option of allowing early voting on Sundays. Voting experts say the bill expands early voting access, the opposite of Democratic claims.

40 Even President Biden's claim that the law bans voters from receiving water and food while waiting in line is false. The bill prevents electioneering under the guise of offering food and water, but it allows poll workers to provide self-service water to voters close to the polls and allows anyone to offer food and drinks more than 150 feet away from the polling location or more than 25 feet from people in line. It also requires polls where there is a wait of more than an hour to hire enough staff to reduce the waiting time. That will make it easier, not harder, for people to vote.

45 No bill is perfect, and reasonable people can disagree about the balance between voter access and election integrity. But Democratic claims that this law amounts to racist voter suppression should be seen for what they are: overwrought partisan rhetoric that unnecessarily increases racial and political tensions.

50

## **We were warned about a divided America 50 years ago. We ignored the signs.**

Elizabeth Hinton, *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2021

The fires in Minneapolis, Portland, Ore., and elsewhere last summer drew immediate comparison to the “long, hot summer” of 1967. Urban uprisings had erupted during every summer of Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidency, but the unprecedented property damage and civilian casualties in Newark and Detroit that July demanded immediate action. Less than a week after deploying federal troops in Detroit, Johnson established a special National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, whose goal was drafting “measures to prevent or contain such disasters in the future.”

Known by the name of its chairman, Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, the Kerner Commission released its 431-page report in February 1968. It famously observed that the United States was moving toward “two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal,” and offered policy options to manage the “problems of race relations.”

The remedies began with the “enrichment” of the separated society, then moved toward “the integration choice.” Aiming to achieve “freedom for every citizen to live and work according to his capacities and desires, not his color,” the commission recommended the creation of 2 million jobs for low-income Americans, continued federal intervention to ensure school desegregation, year-round schooling for low-income youths, the construction of hundreds of thousands of public housing units and a guaranteed minimum income.

Unfortunately, Johnson and subsequent federal policymakers did not follow that path. And despite the crisis of urban unrest that inspired the commission’s work, the administration did not even address the basic police reforms it outlined. Instead, policymakers escalated the use of aggressive patrol strategies from the War on Crime that Johnson launched in 1965, eventually fostering the mass criminalization of low-income Americans of color.

As in the 1960s, the nation today stands at a turning point. A growing mandate for racial justice has been propelled by the massive demonstrations that followed the killing of George Floyd in May 2020. At the same time, the escalation of white-supremacist violence threatens to further divide the public. The moment demands that policymakers rethink priorities and, in the process, right the wrongs of history. This urgent transformation must start with the nation’s policing and prisons systems, which have functioned as the engine of racial inequality since the fall of Jim Crow.

In 1968, the Kerner Commission warned that the aggressive enforcement of misdemeanors encouraged arbitrary “stop-and-frisk” interrogations and racial profiling. Yet this strategy became entrenched in urban policing and remains so in many cities today. Moreover, under Johnson’s War on Poverty, law enforcement officials came to assume greater influence in the administration of all social programs. Community-based welfare initiatives were defunded and replaced with neighborhood police stations, such as the police-run recreation center that replaced the health clinic in the National Capital Authority Housing Projects in Southeast D.C. Through the 1970s, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration created by Johnson granted state and local governments what amounts to \$25 billion in today’s dollars to expand and modernize their police forces, courts and prisons.

In the absence of the widespread implementation of the jobs, education and housing programs the Kerner Commission had imagined, poverty and crime increased in many vulnerable neighborhoods. The fact that the strategies federal policymakers developed to fight the wars on crime and drugs proved to have the opposite impact in the low-income communities of color they targeted is one of the most disturbing ironies in the history of American domestic policy.

Meanwhile, community-based public safety efforts championed by the Kerner Commission were often ignored or underfunded by policymakers and law enforcement.

This choice led to tragic failures. In 1978, Black police officers in the Afro-American Patrolman’s League united with residents of Chicago’s Robert Taylor Homes — a massive housing project plagued by violent crime — to form the League to Improve the Community, which developed ambitious programs to address drug abuse, youth crime and gang violence with education, counseling and job training. They applied to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for at least \$600,000 to fund these programs and unarmed resident patrols.

HUD promptly rejected the League’s proposal. Instead, the Carter administration allocated \$3.4 million, matched by an additional \$2 million from the city of Chicago, to install security cameras, vandal-proof mailboxes, metal bars and barbed wire fences, and to expand the housing project’s police force. As violence persisted, recreational facilities, health-care services and basic infrastructure continued to deteriorate until the project was demolished beginning in 1998.

We must not make the mistake of overlooking such promising efforts again. Today, community groups from Oakland Power Projects in the Bay Area to the Detroit Justice Center are asking for funding and political support for work they are already doing to keep their communities safe. With more than 50 years of hindsight, we know the punitive policy path has only exacerbated inequality and incited racial divisions. The unpursued alternative — focusing on the conditions themselves and encouraging widespread community participation — not only is cost effective but also has the potential to make all Americans safer. Reversing the misguided policies of the past is the first step toward a more equitable future.

*Elizabeth Hinton is a professor of history, law and African American studies at Yale and the author of the forthcoming America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s.*

## Why corporate America is declaring independence from the GOP

Michele Norris, *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2021

If you want a sense of the endgame in the ongoing showdown between aggrieved Republicans and corporate leaders willing to criticize the party's efforts to roll back voting rights, just flip on your TV and watch the ads. The outcome is easy to see in the stream of multicultural and often mixed-raced families buying cars, taking vacations, planning their retirements, doing laundry and laughing at the dinner table.

5 You don't watch television? Just pay attention to the pop-up ads when you surf the Web. See the smiling faces — the sea of Black, Brown, tan and golden faces — that make it clear that corporate America knows that scenes of White families are no longer the only aspirational groupings that make customers want to open their wallets. The GOP and corporate America have been engaged in two very interesting but very different branding exercises over the past decade. For years, these two campaigns allowed both sides to maintain their mutually beneficial arrangement. In recent days, however, the two branding campaigns have collided over the most basic question in our democracy: Who gets to vote and how? Which brand will emerge from this collision in better shape is already a foregone conclusion. But the reason may have less to do with right and wrong than profit and loss. Under the old arrangement, corporate America would reliably deliver huge sums of money to GOP campaigns and causes, and Republicans would deliver lower taxes on income and capital gains in return. If big companies did not endorse everything the party stood for, they remained mostly silent in service of their bottom line.

10 But after a brief period of experimenting with big-tent politics during the first and second Bush presidencies, the Republican Party has lurched dramatically rightward since the election of Barack Obama. The GOP narrowed its goals to serve a largely White, largely evangelical and largely nonurban base that is hostile to immigration, science, and anything associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. At the same time, many big corporate firms have come to see themselves as allies of immigration, science and foreign engagement and have worked to signal their virtues through ads and statements of solidarity following the protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd.

15 After Georgia lawmakers passed a law that disproportionately limits ballot access for people of color based on false claims of voter fraud, Delta Air Lines and Coca-Cola at first tried to skirt the issue and then finally cried foul. Major League Baseball moved the summer All-Star Game out of Georgia in protest. And almost 200 companies — including HP, Salesforce and Under Armour — signed a statement that denounced similar efforts underway to limit ballot access in other states. These steps hit the GOP where it must have caused some pain. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) warned corporate America to stay out of politics but quickly backtracked to clarify that he was "not talking about political contributions."

20 That was a reminder that Republicans who accuse corporations of trying to stay on the right side of the woke police fail to understand that there are much larger forces at work. Part of what is going on here is that corporations are protecting their bottom lines as America steams toward the majority-minority tipping point sometime around 2047. The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will increase by about 24 percent by 2060; adults and their children who are not White will likely account for most of that growth. That multiculti future has already arrived for America's youngest citizens; White children are now a minority of Americans under the age of 17.

25 Any company interested in cultivating the multihued, multiethnic, cross-marrying, immigrant consumer of the future would have to think hard about continuing to move in lockstep with a Republican Party that is determined to time-travel back to the 1950s, when white supremacy was thought to be permanent.

30 America's real future is more colorful, more vibrant, more diverse than the continuing tableau of overwhelmingly White GOP conventions, fundraisers and leadership summits. But let us also admit that the recent spate of corporate activism does not signal a deeper commitment to liberal causes. Some of the CEOs who have spoken out against repressive voting schemes must do a better job of diversifying their own leadership teams and workforces.

35 40 45 This much is clear: The demographic reshuffling already underway will alter our culture, our politics and who has the reins of power. Much of the Republican agenda is fueled by a fear of this future. Corporations that want to embrace that future — and the wave of consumers it will bring — cannot continue to partner with a party that is only interested in representing the part of America it finds acceptable.

## How Biden's New Deal can really make America great again

Fareed Zakaria, *The Washington Post*, April 2, 2021

While Donald Trump claimed he wanted to "Make America Great Again," President Biden is attempting to actually do it. The former president's slogan got Americans thinking nostalgically about the 1950s and early '60s, when the United States dominated the world and its economy produced rising wages for workers and executives alike. A defining feature of those years was federal investment in infrastructure, scientific  
5 research and education. (Think interstate highways, NASA and the massive expansion of public universities.) By contrast, Washington in recent years has mostly spent money to fund private consumption by giving people tax cuts or transfer payments. Biden's infrastructure plan is the first major fiscal program in five decades that would focus once again on investment.

When you look at federal spending as a whole, it seems to have risen significantly over the past few  
10 decades. But the composition of that spending tells the real story — most of that increase is a result of sharp rises in entitlement programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Core investment spending has actually dropped substantially. The United States used to spend as much as 3 percent of its gross domestic product on transportation and water infrastructure; that number is now closer to 2 percent. The United States used to be the world's unquestioned leader in basic science and technology. China is now almost on par with it.  
15 Biden's plan harks back to the New Deal. During the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built or improved almost 1,000 airports, creating the backbone of the modern airline industry. The president's proposal will help create a modern electric vehicle system by funding a network of 500,000 chargers. The 1936 Rural Electrification Act brought electricity to rural areas. Biden proposes doing the same with high-speed Internet, which he argues is the equivalent in today's economy. The New Deal was  
20 bigger (relative to the size of the economy at the time), but it is the only valid comparison with what the Biden administration is proposing. Where the spirit of the New Deal is sorely needed today is in the cost, efficiency and transparency of these kinds of projects. The United States used to be able to build things with astonishing speed. The George Washington Bridge, the world's longest suspension bridge when it  
25 opened in 1931 across the Hudson River from Manhattan to New Jersey, was built in four years, ahead of schedule and under budget. By contrast, just adding two miles of new subway lines and three new stations in Manhattan took, depending on when you start counting, 10 to 100 years and ended up costing \$4.5 billion by the time it opened in 2017.

Building infrastructure in the United States is insanely expensive. *The New York Times* found that another  
30 project in New York, an expansion of the Long Island Rail Road, was the most expensive subway track on Earth, coming in at seven times the world average. New York is particularly bad — in a league of its own — but U.S. infrastructure often costs several times more than it does in Europe. Paris, Rome and Madrid have managed to build subway extensions for less. Yet those cities are hundreds of years older than any in the United States, and they have many unions and tons of regulations. So none of the usual excuses will do.

One recent study found that the cost of building U.S. interstate highways quadrupled from the 1960s to the  
35 1990s, though material and labor costs have barely budged (after accounting for inflation). There are lots of reasons: multiple authorities (each with a veto), endless rules and reviews, and likely corruption. [...]. American exceptionalism has led to an exceptional, uniquely bad system for building infrastructure. By contrast, the New Deal was surprisingly well-run. The WPA employed 3 million people at its peak, more  
40 than any private company. In today's workforce that would be about 10 million people. The entire enterprise was skillfully managed by Harry Hopkins, a social worker-turned-bureaucrat who was one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's closest aides. The vast Tennessee Valley Authority — spanning seven states and eventually comprising about 30 hydroelectric dams — was devotedly led by David Lilienthal, a crusading lawyer. Most of the funds appropriated for the New Deal were administered scrupulously by Interior  
45 Secretary Harold Ickes, another confidant of FDR. Each of these men developed a reputation for honesty, efficiency and reliability, which in turn made people believe that government could do big things and do them well.

For the Biden administration to truly be transformative, it needs to rival not only the ambition of the New Deal but also its impressive execution.

**The Supreme Court must undo the harms that flowed from its 'Roe v. Wade' overreach**  
Hugh Hewitt, *The Washington Post*, May 25, 2021

The landmark Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision establishing the right to abortion arrived in January 1973. It happened during a month of milestones in a long season of American convulsions. Former president Lyndon B. Johnson died the same day Roe was handed down, two days after Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as president for a second term, and a day before Nixon would announce the Paris Peace Accords ending the Vietnam War — or so the country believed. For five-plus years, riots and protests, assassinations and cultural upheaval had divided the United States as it had not been divided since the Civil War. The hope that the announcement of peace in the Vietnam War would restore calm to the country was misplaced; the Roe decision guaranteed that the country's divisions would deepen. Now, nearly half a century later, the Supreme Court has agreed to take up a case that could finally undo Roe's vast expansion of the judiciary's power. But such hopes have been disappointed in the past. President Ronald Reagan — whose 1980 election was aided by a pro-life movement responding to Roe — appointed Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, Antonin G. Scalia and Anthony M. Kennedy, raising expectations that the court would repudiate its overreach. Those hopes rose higher when another Republican president and Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush, appointed Justices David H. Souter and Clarence Thomas.

Then came the stunning Planned Parenthood v. Casey ruling in 1992. Far from going back to judging instead of legislating, the court — led by a "joint opinion" from O'Connor, Kennedy and Souter — invented from whole cloth a risible new "test" for abortion legislation and whether it would place an "undue burden" on women seeking abortions. Roe had been the first breach of the court's banks of appropriate authority; this ruling was a second, even greater assertion of judicial power. And it set a pattern for decades to come. The court's steady gathering of ultimate authority across those years was described in 2015 by Scalia as "This practice of constitutional revision by an unelected committee of nine, always accompanied (as it is today) by extravagant praise of liberty." Scalia spoke for tens of millions of Americans when he also wrote that "the Ruler of 320 million Americans coast-to-coast, is a majority of the nine lawyers on the Supreme Court." The court's expeditions into areas long reserved to legislatures were as unnecessary as they were fraught, no matter an individual's beliefs. In 1973, many states were already moving, through legislative action, toward revisions of laws governing reproductive rights, just as they were on same-sex marriage in 2015. (It was the court's ruling on this subject that prompted Scalia's thundering appraisal, above, of the justices' undoing of constitutional order generally.) The dissension and acidity in the court's opinions in these cases are reflected throughout the politics of the period since Roe. If the Supreme Court has become the supreme legislature and executive as well as judiciary, what point is there in state politics and much of congressional deliberation as well? To simply tax and spend?

Now perhaps the court will finally come to grips with the consequences of that unconstitutional ambition to be the "decider in chief" of all divisive issues. In deciding to hear a case next fall involving a Mississippi law that bans most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy (Roe drew the line at six months), the court will, in effect, weigh the right of states to establish their own abortion laws without regard for Roe and Casey. Defenders of Roe and Casey praise stare decisis — ruling according to precedent — but as Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. explained in his concurring opinion in *Citizens United* in 2010, the "greatest purpose" of this doctrine "is to serve a constitutional ideal — the rule of law." He continued: "It follows that in the unusual circumstance when fidelity to any particular precedent does more to damage this constitutional ideal than to advance it, we must be more willing to depart from that precedent."

Roberts pointed to, among other examples, the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 overruling the holding of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 that "separate could be equal." Terrible decisions must be struck from the books even if they have set the law for more than 50 years. Immense damage has been done by Roe and Casey to the ideas of self-government, federalism and the rule of law. The debate over abortion, unlike that around same-sex marriage, was not widely and quickly settled, but has only grown deeper and more divisive. Roe and Casey should be overturned, and the issues of abortion rights returned to the states from which they were ripped in 1973. The repudiation of those cases should be accompanied by an admission of human error and the limits of the court's power to adjudicate every or even most debates. The sunk costs of five decades of judicial misadventure do not oblige the court to continue in error.

*Hugh Hewitt is a conservative radio talk show host, and president of the Richard Nixon Foundation.*

## **Pentagon officially ends transgender military ban Trump imposed**

Alex Ward, *Vox*, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021

The Defense Department just unveiled new policies allowing transgender people who meet military standards to serve openly in their self-identified gender, repealing Trump-era restrictions that for four years effectively banned trans people from serving. Pentagon officials confirmed reporting by the Associated Press on Wednesday that the Biden administration would put its new policy into place in 30 days, surely a relief for the roughly 15,000 service members who identify as transgender.

“The secretary of defense strongly believes that the all-volunteer force thrives when it is composed of diverse Americans who can meet the high standards for military service, and an inclusive force that strengthens our national security posture,” chief Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby told reporters in a press conference.

The new policy also allows trans troops to receive needed transition-related medical care authorized by law and prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, Kirby and other DOD officials said.

Activists who’ve pushed for this day since the Trump years are ecstatic with the Pentagon’s decision.

“We are thrilled the military is putting this ugly and shameful chapter in our nation’s history behind us and once again embracing our nation’s highest ideals of equal opportunity for all,” said Shannon Minter, legal director at the National Center for Lesbian Rights, a group that fought in court to have trans troops again serve openly. “Eliminating the ban recognizes the valuable contributions transgender service members have made, and it will increase our nation’s strength and stability,” Minter said.

This announcement comes after a years-long struggle. In June 2016, then-President Barack Obama’s Defense Secretary Ash Carter said the Defense Department would lift its longstanding ban on transgender service members, a remnant of the days before even the “don’t ask, don’t tell” era in which qualified gay, lesbian, and bisexual Americans were barred from serving openly in the military. The new Obama administration policy allowed for trans people to enlist and serve just as cisgender people do.

But Obama’s successor, President Donald Trump, abruptly reversed that decision with a series of tweets in June 2017. “After consultation with my Generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States Government will not accept or allow ... Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military,” he said, arguing that the military “cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.” Though Trump claimed the high cost of transition-related medical care justified his ban on trans troops, according to a 2016 RAND Corporation report, the military would need just \$2.4 million to \$8.4 million per year to pay for transition-related care, an increase of 0.4 to 0.13 percent in health care spending. For comparison, the military spends five times that amount on Viagra alone.

Stephanie Miller, director of ascension policy at the Pentagon, confirmed to reporters that medical care costs “a handful of a million dollars per year.” Trump’s announcement sparked years of litigation by trans rights groups and other activists, including Minter, who argued Trump’s policy was needlessly and illegally discriminatory. The Pentagon then settled on a slightly less discriminatory policy in April 2019. Trans troops or anyone already in uniform before that date could transition as long as they were medically diagnosed with gender dysphoria and had to serve in the gender assigned at their birth. After that date, though, those with gender dysphoria taking hormones or who had already transitioned could not join the military. President Joe Biden effectively ended that practice five days into his administration. He signed two executive orders which prohibited “involuntary separations, discharges, and denials of reenlistment or continuation of service on the basis of gender identity or under circumstances relating to gender identity.” “It is my conviction as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces that gender identity should not be a bar to military service,” Biden said in a statement at the time.

Hours later, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Biden’s decision also extended to trans people who wanted to join the military: “Prospective recruits may serve in their self-identified gender when they have met the appropriate standards for accession into the military services.”

Austin also gave the Pentagon 60 days to finalize the new policy and officially lift the transgender military ban. Wednesday’s announcement — which fell on the International Transgender Day of Visibility — was the official notice that the Trump-era policy had been reversed and effectively brought back to where it was under Obama.



## A manifesto for making Britain great again

*Robert Shrimmsley finds that a prospectus for the UK's post-Brexit 'reboot' proves to be quite German in detail*

9 January 2021, *The Financial Times*

Brexit has never lacked for optimists, but economically grounded cheerleaders are a little thinner on the ground. The empty rhetoric of exhortation, prime minister Boris Johnson's insistence that Britain "will prosper mightily", remains more common.

5 While the political arguments for leaving the EU are well understood, the economic case has always looked pretty thin. Many of Brexit's most committed advocates were never that bothered about the economic arguments. For them, it was more an existential issue of sovereignty and if it came with a price, well, that cost would have to be borne.

So the news that Alex Brummer, a respected financial journalist and Brexit supporter, was offering an argument for optimism should have made his new book a must-read. And in some ways it is — just not in the way suggested.

10 In the *Great British Reboot*, Brummer offers both reasons to be cheerful and also a manifesto for how to re-engineer the UK economy. It will make for welcome reading in Downing Street as Brummer's prescriptions align rather closely with Johnson's own political prospectus — though the gap between strategy and implementation remains as wide as ever. His analysis of the shortcomings of the British education system and its production line of monoglot generalists is very much to the point.

15 There are moments of political archness. Brummer is too quick to see every European failure as proof of the case for Brexit, though he lists even more British strategic errors that had nothing to do with the EU.

But the author offers many convincing arguments against what Johnson would call the "gloomsters". Brummer asserts that the UK retains "world-beating" advantages in a number of sectors such as science, research, fintech and the creative industries. It has genuinely world-beating universities and a financial sector that has shown itself to be superbly adaptive.

20 He is also rightly scathing on the ways the UK has allowed some of its finest businesses to be snapped up by foreign companies. Today we delight in the triumph of AstraZeneca, but no obstacles were thrown in the path of Pfizer when it tried to buy the pharma company. When Japan's SoftBank swooped for the UK's most important tech company Arm Holdings, its interest was welcomed by the government of Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, as proof that the UK was open for business. Johnson's more Gaullist approach is likely to herald a significant change in attitude but a lot of horses have already bolted.

All these points are valid and are reasons why the full-on catastrophising of some Remainers is likely to prove flawed. That the UK would have been richer remaining within the EU is easy to argue. But Brummer makes a decent fist of arguing that exit need not mean national decline.

30 There is a difference, however, between avoiding the worst and securing the best, and where Brummer fails is in offering many convincing examples of how Brexit will make Britain richer.

Most of the success stories he highlights are unlikely to benefit from Brexit. The university sector, for example, sees little but downsides. And while the UK remains attractive, it is somewhat less alluring for the highly skilled mobile workers it most desires.

35 Few of the economic and industrial policies Brummer espouses required exit from the EU. Were he advocating the low-regulation, low-tax route favoured by some hardline Thatcherites, then the case for leaving Brussels' orbit might hold more philosophical water. But in fact he is arguing for a more active state, a more interventionist government. His prescription is more investment in skills, more support for investment. One might call it a German approach.

40 To that end, this is a curious book. In essence, Brummer's argument is less that the UK will prosper mightily outside the EU than that it can cope and that the political gains can be supported. So not so much a great British reboot as a great British patch job. There is much good sense and much to recommend in this book. It is just that the case it makes has surprisingly little to do with Brexit.

**Coronavirus pandemic has pitted England's mayors against London.** by Georgina Blakely, University of Huddersfield

17 octobre 2020, *The Conversation*

5 The anger was evident in Andy Burnham's voice as he declared that Greater Manchester would stand firm in the face of any UK government attempt to impose a "tier three" restriction on the northern English city-region without adequate financial compensation. The mayor and other local leaders were unanimous in opposing the government's plans as "flawed and unfair". A statement from Burnham, the two deputy mayors and Greater Manchester's ten council leaders declared: "We are fighting back – for fairness and for the health of our people in the broadest sense."

As cities in the North of England have struggled with coronavirus infection rates, local leaders across the political spectrum have been flexing their muscles.

10 Covid-19 has fully exposed the inadequacies of the relationship between central and other tiers of government at the regional and local level in England. It has also made it difficult to deny entrenched structural inequalities. We might all be in the same storm, but we are definitely not all in the same boat.

15 These two truths are closely intertwined: there is a relationship between the highly centralised political system in England and inequality. As Burnham and his counterpart in the Liverpool City Region, Steve Rotherham, have long argued: political decisions taken by a small Westminster elite reflect the reality contained within the circle of the M25 London orbital motorway. They do not reflect the reality of life outside of this circle. And that perpetuates inequalities. Large city-regions in the North, for example, faced the largest spending cuts after the 2008 financial crash with one estimate claiming that "on a per capita basis, Liverpool has seen the largest cut". Transport spending on London and the South-East far outstrips transport spending in the North and, during the pandemic, there has been evidence of "a gaping North-South divide on access to testing".

20 The political leadership being demonstrated by combined authority mayors across the North is all the more striking in its contrast to the absence of clear and coherent leadership from the centre.

25 Leaders across the North have signed various devolution deals since 2014. But the pandemic has reinforced a growing feeling that the original terms of the deals are inadequate and that the devolution journey needs to be accelerated. The horse-trading that has accompanied the latest government negotiations with Lancashire and the Liverpool City Region, resulting in different restrictions and funding in each area despite both being in tier three, should come as no surprise. It reflects the transactional nature of the original deals negotiated individually between government and each area.

Local leaders have clamoured to take decisions locally. As care homes struggled in April, Burnham called on the national government to use the expertise of local authorities and their "well established logistics systems" about the easing of restrictions when infection rates remained high in their areas.

30 This was followed in June by their joint concern about the lack of clear data to support decisions around local lockdowns. By September, Burnham was calling on the government to reconvene Cobra with representation for all of the English regions alongside London, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

35 The need to take decisions locally has never been more obvious. From sourcing PPE to housing rough sleepers to using local expertise in track and trace systems. The inadequacies of PPE supplies saw Greater Manchester set up its own PPE taskforce to provide a central system of procurement and distribution for frontline workers.

40 It has all served to teach many people who didn't already know it that local authorities matter. Metro-mayors are proving their worth by using their collective voice to draw attention to the plight of their city-regions and they have been crucial in acting as convenors and coordinators of their local authorities. Yet it is local authorities that have the power to make a difference to track, trace and test systems. It is local authorities that control public health and social care. It is local authorities that run the public services which make a difference to people's lives.

It is therefore alarming to note the extent to which local authorities have been weakened financially, first by austerity and now by the pandemic. The government has promised English local authorities an additional £1bn of financial support on top of the £3.6bn Towns Fund already committed. But this looks set to fall short of what is needed to cover the economic fallout from coronavirus.

45 Burnham's declaration of defiance was a long time in the making. For years there has been a growing appetite for local control and an end to the inadequacies of an over-centralised political system and the related structural inequalities. This all existed long before Covid but the pandemic has certainly highlighted and accelerated existing trends.

50 It is not that Northern leaders have suddenly found a voice. Since their election in May 2017, metro-mayors have combined to lobby central government for further devolution. Current calls for a seat at the Cobra table are a reminder of their earlier pleas to have representation in the Brexit negotiations. Their political voice is therefore not new. But that voice is finally starting to be heard.

**Boris Johnson's government wants more patriotic cultural institutions**  
*Grandees are appalled at ministerial interference*

5 June 2021, *The Economist*

DAYS BEFORE he retired at the end of 2015, Neil MacGregor addressed colleagues and friends at the British Museum. As they raised their glasses, he quoted T.S. Eliot: "For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice." A few years on, however, the commanding voice in museumland is not his successor as

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director of the British Museum, nor is it another grandee. It is the government. In February the chairman of the Royal Museums Greenwich, a devoted Tory, resigned after ministers blocked the reappointment of a trustee, an academic who reportedly advocated "decolonising" the history curriculum and had liked Labour Party content on Twitter. In March a trustee of the Science Museum withdrew her application for a second term after she was asked to "explicitly express support" for the government's policy on the removal of contentious historical objects. "Today it is contested heritage. Tomorrow it may be another issue," she wrote.

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The interference is part of an effort by ministers to reshape British institutions to the tastes of the new Tory electorate—patriotic and more working-class than before—by shifting power from the country's cultural elite. After a year in which commercial revenue has crashed, museums are vulnerable to being leant on (even before the covid-19 pandemic, they depended on the state for more than half their income). And Boris Johnson is clear about his preferences. He has lambasted Labour for "spending most of their time wondering which public statues to tear down or whether 'Hereward the Wake' should now be known as 'Hereward the Woke'."

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This desire to reshape cultural institutions is not entirely new. After David Cameron became prime minister in 2010, the Conservative-led government wanted to root out the "Labour luvvies" it felt to have infiltrated the boards of Britain's cultural institutions under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Most trustees serve two terms of four years, which means that almost all existing ones have been approved by a Tory government. Mr Johnson's government is demonstrating a greater willingness to actually intervene in the process.

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Museum leaders have been informed of new expectations. Oliver Dowden, the culture secretary, privately rebuked Mr MacGregor's successor, Hartwig Fischer, for moving a terracotta bust of the British Museum's founder, Sir Hans Sloane, from a pedestal to a nearby cabinet. (As well as being an energetic collector, Sloane was a slave owner.) Mr Dowden went on to argue that: "The people who run [heritage organisations] need the courage to stand up to the political fads and noisy movements of the moment."

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He has also written to museum leaders to tell them that they should notify the government of any planned changes or public statements regarding controversial bits of history. Failure to comply could put funding at risk, the letter explained. One former museum director called the move "unprecedented", saying "in terms of direct engagement of a government with the content of a museum, it marked an extraordinary constitutional step".

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Under the British trustee system, national museums are answerable to Parliament, rather than government ministers (as they are in France, for example). Yet at the first meeting of the newly formed government Heritage Advisory Board, in mid-May, Mr Dowden argued that museums should be bound by guidelines the government is drawing up which say to "retain and explain" controversial objects rather than removing them. The board includes Trevor Phillips, a broadcaster, and Robert Tombs, a Cambridge historian, both of whom have written in defence of controversial statues. It does not contain any museum directors.

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European museums are heading in a different direction. On May 18th the Dutch king opened an exhibition at the Rijksmuseum examining how the country benefited from slave labour. Germany has agreed to return hundreds of objects that were stolen during the colonisation of Nigeria. Neither would now happen in Britain, a museum director says. The difference does not reflect public opinion. According to YouGov, a pollster, just one in three Britons believe the empire is something of which to be proud, compared with one in two Dutch.

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Museum executives see the government's moves as a breach of their historic independence, which, in the case of the British Museum, is enshrined in a parliamentary act from 1753. Twenty years ago Labour made free entry to museums a key government policy, but interference on questions of governance and programming is new. Insiders see the government's moves as a breach of the arms-length relationship between museums and ministers that has lasted for decades. For the government to flex its muscles in this way is, a former director reckons, a "clear sign that this is about controlling and neutralising sources of opposition of all sorts."

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#### Historic opportunities

Along with the Royal Museums Greenwich, the National Gallery will soon start to search for a new chair, following the sudden resignation of Tony Hall on May 22nd after he was revealed to have ineffectively investigated journalistic malpractice at the BBC. Sir Richard Lambert is due to step down as chair of the British Museum next February. Many in the museum world will be watching carefully to see exactly how, rather than whether, the government will try to interfere.

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**'Brexit failed us completely'**, by Claire McNeilly

*As Belfast reels after another night of violence on its streets, this bloodshed feels darkly reminiscent of the Troubles. Claire McNeilly reports from a country divided once again.*

20 April 2021, *London Evening Standard*

5 THEY were scenes we thought had been consigned to a darker history. Mass rioting in the streets of Belfast, Newtownabbey, Carrickfergus, Ballymena, Coleraine and Londonderry; petrol bombs and missiles being thrown at police and others; hijacked and burned vehicles; a city skyline tinged with smoke and flames. Last night, furniture was set alight in the middle of a Belfast street. Welcome to post-Brexit Northern Ireland. It's all darkly familiar to those that remember the Troubles, yet most of the perpetrators of this latest surge of violence weren't born then or even when "peace" came, courtesy of the Good Friday Agreement, 23 years ago. The vicious rioting over the last few weeks is the Protestant/loyalist community's response to the detested Northern Ireland Protocol — which has introduced an economic border between NI and Great Britain, and raised fears of an ultimate reunification of Ireland.

10 In October 2019, Boris Johnson — in his attempts to "get Brexit done" — put a customs border in the Irish Sea, separating the rest of the UK from Northern Ireland and meaning it would be treated as if it was still in the EU. In practical terms this means bureaucratic checks on imports and exports — for example, food being held up. This protocol was the inevitable result of a hard Brexit championed for years by the Democratic Unionist Party — whom most of the rioters will vote for when they're old enough. The DUP, Northern Ireland's largest political party, retains the support of grassroots loyalists, who are accusing Downing Street, not Stormont, of political treachery.

15 Joel Keys, a 19-year-old mobile phone sales assistant from west Belfast, tells me about his part in the unrest. He is older than most of the young rioters whose actions have left more than 80 police officers injured since April 2, and he was arrested during the first night of rioting in the city centre, and later released without charge. He told me that as well as the unrest over borders, the violence — which the Police Service of Northern Ireland has described as the worst in years — is the inevitable result of living in what he calls a "two-tier policing state" where people feel that  
20 loyalists are treated less favourably than nationalists. It's the opposite of what was euphemistically called "the Troubles", when young Catholics/nationalists felt they were being treated as second-class citizens. While Keys doesn't condone the violence — orchestrated by older, more sinister elements — he stopped short of condemning it.

25 "The only people providing frustrated kids in deprived areas with a solution are the adult trouble-makers; the politicians here have failed us," he said. "Young loyalists are being told the only way they can fight back is by rioting."

This violence had another novel element — rioters holding a petrol bomb in one hand and recording themselves on a mobile phone in the other. It could return to haunt them, with a PSNI unit now set up to trawl through hours of CCTV, television and social media footage. Scores of arrests are expected. Shockingly, many parents appeared to be arming kids for battle. "I saw one father — my neighbour — lighting the petrol bombs, then handing them to his son to hurl at  
30 police," explained one woman. "Finally, the mother came out and said, 'That's enough for tonight', and the pair of them stopped."

Normally these types of situations don't subside until a tragic death douses the flames, as was the case two years ago when journalist Lyra McKee was shot and killed while reporting on a riot in Derry. Here, the death of the Duke of Edinburgh led to what is hoped will be more than just a temporary calming of tension.

35 The influential Loyalist Communities Council umbrella group, while denying any paramilitary involvement in the unrest, said it was "seeking an end to all violence and to solve the underlying concerns of the loyalist and unionist communities" and clergy from across the traditional dividing lines also put on a demonstration of unity. Northern Ireland Secretary of State Brandon Lewis, meanwhile, told the Commons this week that the PSNI needs to reconnect with communities to restore trust. Unfortunately for Mr Lewis, "trust" in the Tories, especially among unionists and  
40 loyalists, is rather limited following Boris Johnson's bombastic insistence at the 2018 DUP conference that "no British Conservative government could or should sign up to any such arrangement" between the UK and the EU that involved setting up an economic border in the Irish Sea. With their politicians already feeling that they've been thrown under the proverbial bus, Northern Ireland's pan-unionist community took little comfort from the Prime Minister's recent declaration of "deep concern" over how anger over the protocol has manifested itself. On Wednesday, it emerged that  
45 widespread acts of "civil disobedience" over coming weeks were being planned by loyalists. It's going to be a long, volatile summer.

**Britishness itself is under attack from those who want to rewrite our history**, by Philip Johnston5 May 2021, *Daily Telegraph*

There was something almost noble in the determination of people to sit outside in the cold and rain over the bank holiday weekend in order to savour a taste of freedom. Their resolve was captured by the photograph of half a dozen doughty al fresco diners braving the elements under a canopy of umbrellas in a Devonian pub garden. The caption in this newspaper suggested they were showing "true British grit", a tenacity and stubbornness translated into a national characteristic.

When we used to talk about Britishness there was a general, though vague, understanding of what it meant. It was a unifying concept intended to bind disparate nationalities, cultures and identities together. No one is only British. People can be English and British, Scottish and British, Northern Irish and British (even if the latter has always been problematic, to put it mildly), or Indian and British. It began as an artificial construct but has always had an inclusive purpose.

Elucidating Britishness has never been an easy task since the idea was first mooted by James I and VI after the union of the crowns in 1603. James also wanted to unite the parliaments, but despite his best endeavours this would not happen for another 100 years. He designed a new flag, annoying his fellow Scots by superimposing the cross of St George on the Saltire, and encouraged public discourse to champion the virtues of British union.

He minted a new £1 coin called the Unite which identified James as the king of Great Britain. Even Shakespeare, ever mindful of political realities, pitched in to promote the notion of being "British" for the first time in one of his greatest plays. As the literary historian James Shapiro observed in his book *1606*: "From its opening scene, when a map of Britain is brought on stage, King Lear wrestles with what Britishness means, especially in relationship to the longstanding national identities it superseded. Was it really possible to forget national origins, or do deeper loyalties and suppressed nationalism inevitably emerge?"

Four hundred years on and that question of national identity vexes us once more. But whenever politicians try to set out what they consider to be core British values, they invariably emphasise abstract concepts. Gordon Brown tried to address this subject as prime minister and came up with liberty, tolerance, fair play and a sense of humour, none of which are uniquely British even if there are countries that lack some or all of them.

That debate took place in the aftermath of the July 7 London transport bombings amid concern that immigration had inspired a multiculturalist rejection of a common identity. But in fretting about the need to assimilate newcomers, our politicians were reluctant to reinforce the idea of Britishness among the settled population.

Scottish nationalism, in particular - galvanised by the devolutionary settlement that was supposed to kill it off - has served to discredit the very Britishness that gave the Scots a global identity above and beyond their own distinctive cultural and historical bonds.

Not for nothing does Boris Johnson, much to its annoyance, insist on calling the SNP the Scottish nationalist - rather than national - party, to emphasise the insularity of its outlook. However much they may protest otherwise, the SNP are happy to play up antipathy to the English because defining themselves against their big neighbour manifests itself in grievance and resentment that helps fuel their cause.

British values are rooted in the institutions and history that underpin the nation, and which politicians are often ambivalent about or are reluctant to praise unequivocally for fear of offending someone.

One reason Brown struggled to give form to his inchoate ideas of Britishness was because a section of the Labour Party was hostile towards many of the institutions that glue the nation together. Tony Blair had previously sought to realign Labour with patriotism only to be thwarted by the Left's insistent demonisation of the country's history.

One consequence was that when the Labour government introduced citizenship classes for immigrants, rather than being the sort of unabashed exercise in patriotism seen in America - extolling a love of country, its rituals, democratic practices and even the free market - they became a practical guide to living in Britain and what the entitlements of citizenship might bring. Moreover, the internet has also atomised society and made collective national experiences few and far between.

What is to be done or is it all too late? If the SNP wins an outright majority in the Holyrood parliament tomorrow, Mr Johnson has promised to respond with a spending splurge on infrastructure and health care in Scotland to forestall a "yes" vote in another referendum, should one happen, legally or not.

**The Union will remain in peril until an English parliament is on the table**, by Philip Johnston21 April 2021, *Daily Telegraph*

5 We might be on the cusp of the greatest constitutional crisis for 100 years. Victory for the SNP in next month's Holyrood elections will confront Boris Johnson with a renewed demand for an independence referendum which he proposes to deny them. Next month also marks the centenary of the partition of Ireland and the creation of the United Kingdom as we know it today. The anniversary coincides with an upsurge of anger among supporters of the Union in Northern Ireland who believe they have been betrayed by the Brexit trade deal. As the summer advances and the marching season begins, these tensions can only worsen.

10 What is to be done? Is constitutional reform the answer or are political solutions available? The immediate threats could be disarmed by two decisions. The first would be to accept that an SNP win on May 6 is a mandate for another referendum and let Nicola Sturgeon hold one. This is the best time possible for Unionists. Scotland's voters are aware that being part of the UK has helped them through the Covid pandemic and accelerated the arrival of a vaccine. They know they get a good deal out of the Barnett formula, with £130 spent on public services north of the border for every £100 spent in England. They don't want to join the euro but would have to if they sought membership of the EU. All of these arguments could be deployed in a campaign held soon. But denying a referendum will change the narrative to one of an English Tory leader blocking Scotland's right to self-determination. Those urging Boris to tough it out need to consider that it will be politically impossible to hold the line but by then the advantage will have been lost. Boris should call Ms Sturgeon's bluff by proposing an immediate plebiscite and not wait until 2023 as the SNP leader has suggested. It would be a gamble but one the separatists would lose.

20 The second issue can be resolved by repudiating the Northern Ireland protocol and stopping treating part of the UK as though it were still part of the EU. Mr Johnson does not want to do this because he signed an international treaty evidently trusting that the Unionists would not notice that the status of the province had changed. Again, politics might work here if an agreement can be reached with the EU to remove the absurd amounts of red tape that now foul up trade between Britain and Northern Ireland. But the province would still have to stick to single market rules, so the fundamental flaw at the heart of the protocol would not be dealt with.

25 Since these are essentially matters of identity, instead of cobbled together political solutions that fall apart with a change of administration, might they need permanent fixing through new structures of governance? To that end, the Constitution Reform Group (CRG) is today proposing a new Act of Union to forestall what they fear will be the break-up of the UK. Made up of Tory, Labour and Lib Dem politicians, as well as former first ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the CRG says in a letter sent to all party leaders that the existing constitutional arrangements for the United Kingdom are "unsustainable and deficient". When it comes to discussing these great matters, however, the biggest piece of the jigsaw always seems to be ignored. It's all well and good proposing a new relationship between the constituent parts of the kingdom, but it needs to accommodate the dominant member, England.

35 Indeed, one reason why devolution was always a problematic concept was because it enfeebled the centrifugal forces of the Union that bind England to the rest. Its institutions tend to unify, whereas the differing traditions and history of its component parts pull in the opposite direction, sometimes breaking the bonds entirely, as in 1921. Devolution weakened the glue that held the whole together but there is no going back now. The challenge is how to stop it cracking apart entirely and this needs to address the English Question. While the English feel their identity strongly, they rarely make much of it. Friday is St George's Day and though there will be events up and down the land, more so than when I was growing up, the Thames won't be dyed red and white nor will many people be sporting red roses in their lapels. Overt expressions of Englishness always appear to be frowned upon, whereas flaunting one's Irish or Scots heritage is almost obligatory. Arguably, devolution has transformed the UK into a multi-nation state, though only two of its constituents can truly claim the status of a nation in modern times. Scots nationalists, of course, would be delighted to see separatist impulses develop in England because they want to break up the Union.

45 Without committing itself, the CRG says the option should be available, through a referendum, to set up an English parliament and replace the House of Lords with an elected national assembly. Would this help consolidate a new set of constitutional arrangements - or blow them apart because of England's size and dominance? I don't know the answer to that question; but it certainly needs to be discussed within the context of a proposed new settlement.

**English politicians are waving the union jack, but its meaning is tattered and torn**, by John Harris  
*The constant hoisting of the flag into public view serves only as a reminder that the union is all but over as a political entity.*  
*The Observer*, 22 Mar 2021

5 The new “briefing room” in 10 Downing Street reportedly cost an eye-watering £2.6m to commission and build. Its technical elements were supplied by a Moscow-based company called Megahertz. But aside from those two details, there is nothing terribly surprising about it: done out in a mixture of very Tory blue and natural(ish) wood, it prosaically replicates the basic visual stylings of the Johnson government, something reflected in the presence of no less than four union jacks.

10 Is there now any escape from the red, white and blue? Last week, after being gently mocked for the size of his flag by the BBC presenter Charlie Stayt – which caused an achingly predictable social media storm – the local government secretary, Robert Jenrick, insisted that he was using “a symbol of liberty and freedom that binds the whole country together”. Towards the end of 2020, it was reported that ministers had tried to put the flag on packs of the Covid vaccine manufactured by AstraZeneca (which, contrary to the recent impression that it is somehow a branch of Her Majesty’s government, is actually an Anglo-Swedish company with a French chief executive). Labour, too, has got the bug, as evidenced by Keir Starmer’s recent appearances in front of his own union jack, and February’s news of internal documents pushing the idea that his party should make  
15 as much use of the flag as possible.

20 Not since the far-off days of Tony Blair and Cool Britannia have we seen so much of the UK’s national emblem. But now the mood is altogether more wearied and embattled. The flag’s current prominence is partly the work of the government’s new “union unit”, and reflects a set of ideas recently labelled “hyper-unionism” – reducible to a last-ditch, often aggressive attempt to shore up the United Kingdom and the idea of a common British identity as the foundations of both continue to crumble.

25 Much of this, to state the blindingly obvious, has been either triggered or accelerated by Brexit. Notwithstanding the Scottish National party’s present crisis, Scotland’s place in the union is more doubtful than it has ever been. Welsh support for independence has recently reached a record high, and anxieties – or hopes, depending on your perspective – are slowly rising about the future of Northern Ireland. And so the story goes on: with the monarchy in trouble, and serious attention being paid to the horrors of empire, daily damage to what the flag is supposed to represent has coincided with it being waved around more frantically than ever. The resulting spectacle is strikingly brittle: akin, perhaps, to those late-1980s Soviet military parades  
30 where everyone present knew that the affectations of might and glory had long since become delusional.

35 The UK’s new national mission, the prime minister recently told readers of the Times, is “not to swagger or strike attitudes on the world stage”, but “to use the full spectrum of our abilities ... to engage with and help the rest of the world”. But the kind of patriotism voiced by Tory governments always has a strident, belligerent aspect. In that sense, the flag-waving seamlessly blurs into the so-called war on woke, the government’s aggressive defence of “heritage”, and last week’s news from the Home Office about plans for the UK’s post-Brexit treatment of refugees – who, it seems, are not going to be helped or “engaged with” at all.

40 One of the most self-contradictory aspects of the government’s hyper-unionism is the way it clearly plays to English resentments, raising the flag to declare war on the perfidious Scots, and thereby deepening the UK’s fault lines. And besides, running through both the benign and belligerent versions of Tory patriotism is the hubris crystallised in Dominic Raab’s recent claim that Britain remains a “leading power”. As a result, whenever ministers reach for the flag, they inevitably create a kind of Gogglebox moment, in which the only rational response is to smirk at a spectacle so absurd that it looks downright camp.  
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50 Which brings us to perhaps the most fascinating question of all: what all this national chest-beating might mean to the public. On that score, mass backing in Scotland for independence clearly speaks for itself. So does the 40% support for independence in Wales recorded this month by pollsters, and the first minister Mark Drakeford’s warning that as the government adopts a more and more condescending attitude to the UK’s devolved administrations, “the breakup of the union comes closer every day”. In both countries, union jacks and invocations of the bulldog spirit will surely do the fragile cause of unionism much more harm than good.

## Why Are Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos So Interested in Space?

Kara Swisher, February 26, 2021, *The New York Times*

Why do the world's two richest men want to get off the planet so badly? Elon Musk of Tesla and Jeff Bezos of Amazon have more than \$350 billion in combined wealth and preside over two of the most valuable companies ever created. But when they're not innovating on Earth, they have been focusing their considerable brain power on bringing a multiplanetary human habitat to reality.

5 For Mr. Musk, it's through his other company, SpaceX, which has become an ever-bigger player in the private space-technology arena. On top of satellite launches and other rocket innovations, the company announced it will send its first "all civilian" crew into orbit at the end of the year, in a mission called Inspiration4. SpaceX has already carried NASA astronauts to the International Space Station and is planning to transport more, as well as private astronauts, for a high price. Most ambitiously, Mr. Musk has said that SpaceX will land humans on Mars by 2026. To do that, the private company will use a chunk of the close to \$3 billion — including \$850 million announced this week in a regulatory filing — that it has raised over the last year to finance this herculean effort. While Mr. Musk might not be the first human to go to the red planet, he once told me that he wanted to die there, joking, "Just not on landing." Mr. Bezos, who is stepping down as chief executive of Amazon this year, is expected to accelerate his space-travel efforts through his company Blue Origin, whose tag line reads, in part, "Earth, in all its beauty, is just our starting place."

10 Like SpaceX, Blue Origin is working on payload launches and reusable orbital launch vehicles, as well as on moon landing technology, to achieve what Mr. Bezos once called "low-cost access to space." Blue Origin executives said recently that the company is close to blasting off into space with humans. Mr. Bezos' most extravagant notion, unveiled in 2019, is a vision of space colonies — spinning cylinders floating out there with all kinds of environments. "These are very large structures, miles on end, and they hold a million people or more each," he said, noting they are intended to relieve the stress on Earth and help make it more livable.

15 It's probably good for space innovation that two billionaires are slugging it out and attracting all kinds of start-ups, investments and interest to the area. But all of their frantic aggression has been overshadowed of late by two spectacular efforts by NASA. The two NASA missions delivered this week the kind of awe-inspiring moments that make one look up from the wretched news spewing out of our smartphones toward the stunning celestial beauty of the endless universe.

20 The first was the batch of images from amazing high-definition cameras on the Perseverance rover, a car-size autonomous vehicle that touched down in the Jezero Crater on Mars last week. [...]. The \$2.7 billion Mars mission includes a search for signs of ancient Martian life, sample-collecting and the flight of a helicopter called Ingenuity. But the imagery from Mars was quickly topped by an even older NASA mission to Jupiter by the Juno space probe, which entered the planet's orbit in 2016. It did some very close fly-bys recently that are yielding perhaps the most stunning photos that we've ever seen of the planet.

25 Perhaps the fact that life on Earth feels so precarious at this moment explains, at least in part, why Mr. Bezos and Mr. Musk want to find ways to get off it. But it's important to keep in mind that these two men are just two voices among billions of earthlings. It is incumbent on the rest of us to take more control of how we are going to move into the brave new worlds beyond our own gem of a planet. We have handed over so much of our fate to so few people over the last decades, especially when it comes to critical technology. As we take tentative steps toward leaving Earth, it feels like we are continuing to place too much of our trust in the hands of tech titans. Think about it: We the people invented the internet, and the tech moguls pretty much own it. And we the people invented space travel, and it now looks as if the moguls could own that, too.

30 Let's hope not. NASA, and other government space agencies around the world, need our continued support to increase space exploration. I get that we have enormous needs on this planet, and money put toward space travel could instead be spent on improving lives here on Earth. But the risk to our planet from climate change means we have to think much bigger. Keep in mind a hidden message that NASA engineers put onto the descent parachute of the Perseverance rover. The colors on the chute were a binary code that translates into "Dare mighty things." Coming from across the vast and empty universe, it was a message not meant just for Mr. Bezos and Mr. Musk. It was actually meant for all of us.



## 'Defund the Police' became a Republican weapon in suburban Philly

By Maria Panaritis, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 20, 2020

The calls began a few weeks before Election Day. Each time, they aggressively aimed at one thing: persuading their target to vote for Donald Trump. In this case, that target was a Black Democratic woman with a home address of Upper Darby Township, Delaware County. The pitch she received upon answering the phone was a brass-knuckles doozy. “The cities will burn if Biden gets into office,” the caller proclaimed. She had received similar-sounding warnings in campaign texts and video messages sent to her cell. “You’ll have no police.”

5 The woman on the receiving end was State Representative Margo Davidson. She got several of these calls in the month before Nov. 3. She played along to hear everything the caller had to say. The allusion to street violence after racial justice demonstrations this year was a glimpse, she knew, into how Republicans were trying to defeat her party up and down the ballot, starting with Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden. “Would you vote for Biden if you knew he was going to defund your police department,” the caller hammered, “and allow criminals to run recklessly through your streets?” In the same township but on a different phone line, Democratic County Councilwoman Monica Taylor, who is also Black, was getting pro-Trump and pro-Republican text messages, too. So many, in fact, that they outnumbered the texts she received from campaigns representing Democrats. “The messages from the right were talking a lot about things the president has done that are viewed as good for our country,” Taylor told me, “but also talking about the civil unrest and protecting our police officers ... or our economy and the governor.” These are just two accounts from two elected officials whom I just happened to call after the election to hear what they thought of the most consequential — and still-unfolding — race of our lifetimes. Imagine for a moment how many other calls like those happened elsewhere in Pennsylvania. You have to wonder if, even though Biden emerged the winner, messages like these contributed to Democrats losing seats lower on the ballot. They lost several statewide row office races and legislative contests that would have given them long-sought control of the General Assembly. Clearly, those calls were manipulating public opinion of the violence that followed demonstrations nationally in support of George Floyd, a Black man killed by police. A blaring slogan from those protests, “Defund the Police,” was being used as a bludgeon against Democratic candidates here and elsewhere. [...]

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25 Effective persuasion requires shrewd messaging. As a message, Defund the Police was not smart. Democrats cannot win a majority without moderate voters taking their side. It may have helped if they had been under less pressure to tiptoe around “Defund” for fear of alienating progressives. Even South Carolina Congressman Jim Clyburn, a civil rights leader, had been warning for months that the slogan could backfire. “I don’t know of any person who ran for state legislature who was in favor of defunding the police,” [Bucks County Democratic Committee Chair John] Cordisco said, meaning they did not campaign on it verbatim. “And yet, that message blanketed the [down-ballot] candidates.” Factions within the party have been sparring over the last two weeks over the extent to which that slogan, or poor campaigning, or incredible turnout for Trump, were more to blame for their down-ballot losses.

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35 Turnout for Biden in Philadelphia, we now know, was lackluster but strong in the suburbs. Trump saw his share of Black men and Hispanic voters actually grow in Philadelphia. He also galvanized huge numbers to come out for him all across Pennsylvania. Despite winning the big prize, Biden had no coattails for lower-level Democratic candidates. His party, it seems, was not the winner in the hearts of voters, as Davidson sensed even in her very blue district along the border of West Philadelphia.

40 “I tried to sound the alarm,” Davidson said. “I was having a lot of conversations with young Black voters. They were saying they weren’t that excited about Biden; they liked Trump’s bravado.”

Similarly, she sensed that Hispanic voters were lukewarm for Democrats, too, from conversations she was having in the district. “Defund,” which became a darling of some in the mainstream media, did not appear resonant with them. Is it any wonder why? Literally, the words suggest disbanding police forces. Several prominent Black public figures rebuked it, and understandably.

45 One *Inquirer* story noted the muddled meaning: “Depending on who you ask, the answer may be different. Some supporters advocate for abolishing entire police departments. But most say it’s about reallocating money away from police departments and putting it toward social services, and reexamining the role police play in society.” It may be repugnant that Republicans used that slogan to sway voters. There is obvious race-baiting at play there. But Democrats can’t win by whining. They can only win by agreeing on what they mean, meaning something that a majority would support, and then saying it well. “There need to be some real tough conversations,” Davidson said. Let’s hope the party learns from this.

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### **With so many out of work, it's a Labor Day like no other**

The Editorial Board, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 6, 2020

The coronavirus pandemic has not only driven the economy into a recession, but fundamentally changed the relationship between workers and their workplace. That makes this a Labor Day like no other.

5 Some changes, such as work from home for those privileged enough to have a job that can be done remotely, might become permanent features of the economy. A socially distant world meant some jobs disappeared — like those in the entertainment sector — and other jobs became newly essential, although early recognition and respect of front-line workers might prove to have been short-lived. Work-related tasks and challenges also changed, including enforcing sanitation and mask requirements, risking infection in the workplace, and managing a child's school day while working.

10 Then there are the many who don't have a job at all. Pennsylvania's unemployment rate is 13.7% — among the highest of any state in the nation. According to a new report from the PA Budget and Policy Center, Pennsylvania's economy shrank faster than the national average but the partial recovery has also been faster. The economic devastation, the report found, had a disparate impact on low-wage workers, women, and workers of color, including immigrants.

15 Even before the pandemic, Pennsylvania was behind other states in the protections it offers workers — starting with a shameful \$7.25 minimum wage that a Republican-controlled legislature won't consider increasing. With the expiration of federal enhanced unemployment benefits last month, and uncertainty about an extra \$300 that should accompany future unemployment checks, some are hurting now more than they did in the early months.

20 Replacing wages is crucial to stop the bleeding, which is why the notion of stimulus checks emerged early into the pandemic and why Congress initially increased unemployment benefits by \$600 per month.

While wages are key, losing a job means losing much more than income. With work so ingrained into all aspects of American life, culture, and value systems, when work disappears so can a sense of purpose and identity.

25 Economics Nobel Laureate Angus Deaton and Princeton economist Anne Case found that the drop in American life expectancy in recent years can be explained by 'deaths of despair' — overdose, suicide, and alcohol related live diseases. Deaton and Case explain that the increase of death of despair, particularly among white men, can't be explained by short term economic downturns but by the long-term structure of the economy. Among the drivers were deindustrialization and loss of union jobs — which provided income but also status and a sense of belonging.

30 A Penn study published in December found that the closure of auto plants led to large spikes in overdose deaths in the same county. The loss of jobs due to the pandemic, with uncertainty on whether some will ever return, could drive a similar process of despair. The pandemic-induced recession is a dual crisis: an economic crisis and a crisis of despair. By responding swiftly to the former, lawmakers at every level of government can have a positive impact on the latter.

35 The first step is to replace lost wages — Congress can do that by issuing another round of stimulus checks and extending the enhanced unemployment benefits — both provisions of the HEROES act. In addition, lawmakers in D.C. and Harrisburg need to create health insurance bridges to remove the stress that a loss of a job means loss of healthcare — a terrifying prospect especially in a pandemic. In addition, the state and city should look to pass laws that require businesses that re-open to offer laid off employees their job back before they rehire anyone else. This measure could be crucial, for example, for the roughly 2,000 Philadelphia stadium workers represented by UNITE HERE. The California legislature passed this type of bill last week.

45 These protections won't only help with a quicker recovery, they will also give a glimmer of hope to workers who are sidelined for months.

This Labor Day is different than the ones that came before — both in the number of people who have been cut off from their regular labors, and in how much our relationship to and expectations of work have had to change. Leaders at every level of government must recognize this new landscape and understand the actions they take can relieve financial burdens — and real suffering.

## These Capitol riot pictures shouldn't surprise you. They show an American truth

Tim Tai, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 9, 2021

As dramatic images began to emerge of Wednesday's right-wing assault on the U.S. Capitol, many politicians and pundits denounced the insurrection with a common refrain: "This is not America." It was a shocking scene, to be sure: hundreds of self-styled revolutionaries clamoring up the Capitol steps; petrified lawmakers hunkered under their seats, emergency gas masks in hand; and relatively few police in the chamber to protect them, drawing their guns behind a makeshift barricade. In many ways, the day was unprecedented. It was certainly antithetical to what America ought to be. But it was an uprising perpetrated by Americans, on American soil, against the seat of American government, and fomented by the American president. It was, in fact, America. To say "this is not America" suggests that Wednesday's events were an aberration or anomaly. But for those who have chronicled the president's supporters for the last few years, it was the unsurprising and even inevitable culmination of consistently violent, racist, and autocratic rhetoric. As Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah) said to his colleagues when the Senate reconvened hours after the riot, the burden and duty of leadership is to tell the truth. The truth requires us to acknowledge that the current moment is not an isolated incident, but rather the latest chapter of a long history of anti-democratic, racist, and often violent right-wing activity in America. Only after recognizing this can, we try to prevent it from happening again. [...]

The Battle of Liberty Place was an 1874 insurrection by thousands of members of the White League — a white, anti-Reconstruction paramilitary group that included many Confederate veterans — against the Republican state government of Louisiana. They attacked and overpowered the police in New Orleans, then the capital, before being repelled days later by federal troops. None of the insurgents were ever prosecuted. Dozens have been arrested so far for the Capitol riots, but on the day of, onlookers and activists noted how many walked away without punishment.

During the Wilmington Massacre of 1898, hundreds of white vigilantes killed dozens of Black residents and overthrew the elected government of Wilmington, N.C., which included Black leaders. They also burned down the offices of *the Daily Record*, a Black newspaper which had published an editorial defending interracial relationships. After the coup, many Black residents fled the town, and white state legislators began to enact laws that would disenfranchise Black voters for decades to come.

When Trump supporters assaulted Capitol Police on Wednesday, they were supporting a broader effort to disenfranchise voters in Pennsylvania and other states because of false conspiracy theories seeking to delegitimize democratic elections. Decades earlier, police were the ones attacking Black voting rights activists who had organized peaceful marches protesting discriminatory voter registration laws. On March 7, 1965, police, under orders from then-segregationist Gov. George Wallace, stopped several hundred marchers at the end of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala. When the demonstrators did not disperse, the troopers moved in and beat them; the day later became known as "Bloody Sunday." The incident was recorded on camera and galvanized public attention, contributing to the passing of the Voting Rights Act later that year.

As anti-racism demonstrators protested a white nationalist "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017, a man drove his car into the crowd, killing a woman. The driver, James Alex Fields Jr., was convicted in December 2018 of first-degree murder in the death of Heather Heyer. As a result of the Capitol breach, a police officer fatally shot one apparent Trump supporter, one officer died, and three people reportedly died from medical injuries.

Starting in spring 2020, anti-government extremists — often heavily armed — have participated in rallies against states' coronavirus pandemic restrictions, including armed protesters in Michigan who entered the state capitol. In December several men — some of whom were seen holding firearms in the Michigan capitol months earlier — were arrested in what prosecutors allege was a plot to kidnap the state governor. During a special session of the Oregon state legislature on Dec. 21, two and a half weeks before the U.S. Capitol breach, right-wing protesters opposing coronavirus restrictions shattered glass doors and clashed with police as they attempted to storm the state capitol. Some were armed, and police said one used bear spray on officers.

The truth captured in these images cannot be ignored: It is no anomaly when Americans, particularly those with right-wing and white nationalist beliefs, take up arms to intimidate lawmakers and use force to impede such fundamental democratic principles as the right to vote, the peaceful transfer of power, the freedom to protest peacefully, and the rule of law.

## A victory against cancel culture in San Francisco, capital of leftist nuttury

By the Editorial Board, *The Washington Examiner*, February 25, 2021

It's easy to become disheartened these days about America's out-of-control cancel culture, which is gathering momentum and to which there seems no end in sight. This week, however, brought news of at least one small victory for common sense and our shared culture. It came, moreover, in the leftist fever swamp of San Francisco, of all places.

5 After severe backlash, the San Francisco Board of Education backed away from its decision to rename 44 schools. In January, a committee voted to wipe away the names of anyone who, in its opinion, helped perpetuate slavery, racism, colonization, and white supremacy. The historical figures mown down by the broad sweep of the cancellation scythe included George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Paul Revere, Robert  
10 Louis Stevenson, John Muir, and a contemporary entrant, Dianne Feinstein, the Democratic senator.

Even liberals fiercely criticized the decisions. Not only was it absurdly broad and sweeping, but schools were to be given only until April to come up with new names. Furthermore, the board had been moving ahead with this ludicrous plan during a perilous time, with schools  
15 having been shut down for a year and no plan in place to reopen them for in-person learning. It didn't help matters that the school board, in attempting to defend itself, merely revealed the fathomless ignorance of those who had made the decisions. Things got particularly embarrassing when *the New Yorker* interviewed Gabriela Lopez, the head of the school board. At one point, the interviewer, Isaac Chotiner, prodded, "Some of the historical reasoning behind  
20 these decisions has been contested — not so much how we should view the fact that George Washington was a founder of the country and a slaveholder but, rather, factual things, like Paul Revere's name being removed for the Penobscot Expedition, which was not actually about the colonization of Native American lands. And so, there were questions about whether historians should have been involved to check these things."

In response, Lopez served up an illiterate word salad: "I see what you're saying. So, for me, I guess it's just the criteria was created to show if there were ties to these specific themes, right? White supremacy, racism, colonization, ties to slavery, the killing of indigenous people, or any symbols that embodied that. And the committee shared that these are the names that have these  
25 ties. And so, for me, at this moment, I have the understanding we have to do the teaching, but also, I do agree that we shouldn't have these ties, and this is a way of showing it."

30 Chotiner tried again: "Part of the problem is that the ties may not be what the committee said they were." At that point, Lopez said, "So then, you go into discrediting the work that they're doing and the process that they put together in order to create this list. ... I don't want to get into a process where we then discredit the work that this group has done."

35 Get that? Asking historically relevant questions is somehow unfairly "discrediting" the group's work. Her feelings don't care about your facts. It turns out that this absurdity could not hold even in San Francisco, the capital city of left-wing nuttury.

After weeks of backlash, Lopez finally conceded that pushing through the renaming, particularly when the district can't even find a way to get children in classrooms, was not such  
40 a good idea. Calling the debate over renaming "distracting," she wrote, "I acknowledge and take responsibility that mistakes were made in the renaming process." All meetings of the renaming committee have been canceled until further notice, and she vowed that any revived effort would involve more input from the community and consultation with actual historians.

45 The victory may be short-lived — in fact, we'd bet on it — and the renaming effort could return after the pandemic. But what this small victory does show is that even in the most liberal of places, sane people can fight back against cancel culture and win. It is worth keeping up the fight to preserve history and truth.

## Will anyone ever say 'sorry' in Northern Ireland? by Jenny McCartney

*Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries are still unable to acknowledge the terrible wrongs they did*  
4 December 2020. *UnHerd*

5 Once, voters in the Republic of Ireland were largely repelled by [Sinn Féin]'s links to extreme violence. Today, many appear unbothered by that dark history, or might even consider that it adds a touch of radical spice to an otherwise bland democratic soup. That fresh acceptance has been enabled by a narrative — energetically propagated by Sinn Féin itself — which attempts to distance itself from the grotesque detail of IRA violence while simultaneously celebrating an airbrushed version of “the armed struggle”.

10 Although the image that Sinn Féin broadly chooses to project under its leader Mary Lou McDonald is that of a modern Left-wing, progressive party, campaigning on housing and healthcare, it occasionally flashes naked pride in its IRA past — as in February when David Cullinane shouted “Up The ‘Ra!” to celebrate his election as a Sinn Féin TD, or again last week when Brian Stanley, another Sinn Féin TD, tweeted gloatingly that the 1979 “narrow water” incident had taught the British “the cost of occupying Ireland”.

15 Stanley was referring to an attack on Warrenpoint by the IRA's South Armagh brigade in which 18 British soldiers were killed, and over 20 injured. It took place on the very same day that the IRA blew up Lord Mountbatten's fishing boat, killing him along with his 14-year-old grandson Nicholas, the 83-year-old Dowager Lady Brabourne, and a 15-year-old schoolboy called Paul Maxwell who was working as a “boat boy” for the summer.

20 The deaths of two elderly people and two teenage boys that day were presumably also intended to school the British in — to borrow Stanley's parlance — “the cost of occupying Ireland”. Like the soldiers at Warrenpoint, the small party on the boat fell under the IRA's broad definition of “legitimate targets”, and their deaths would have been greeted with glee.

25 The collective memory of Ireland, North and South, is in the throes of an ongoing struggle between actual human experience, factual truth and political propaganda for dominance, in which great swathes of human experience and factual truth are being routinely downgraded, dismissed, insulted or selectively interpreted. That is where the role of the scrupulous historian becomes of great and immediate importance. The book *Lost Lives*, for example, an authoritative compendium of Troubles-related deaths, has long been considered an invaluable chronicle of the reality of that bleak time. Each individual's death is accompanied by a short factual account which tells its own heart-breaking story. Neither  
30 the IRA nor the loyalist paramilitaries come out of it well.

35 Another important contribution to Troubles history has just been published, this time by Liam Kennedy, an emeritus professor of history at Queen's University Belfast. It bears the title *Who Was Responsible For The Troubles?* — a bold choice, since such a question presses directly on the inflamed nerve-endings of historical sensitivities, and has the potential to kick off the debating equivalent of a dust-up in a Belfast bar. Yet Kennedy — a Tipperary-born long-time resident in Belfast, who intimately understands the psychology of both North and South — goes through “the parade of candidates” with an admirable and forensic calm, painstakingly assembling the relevant facts and weighing the role of “both state and non-state actors”.

40 Much of this is directly relevant to Sinn Féin's current attitude to the IRA's past violence — which seems, in its carefully calibrated mixture of dogged justification and fuzzy regret, very similar to Billy Hutchinson's attitude to UVF killing. Earlier this year, Mary Lou McDonald said of the IRA campaign, “I wish it hadn't happened, but it was a justified campaign,” going on to describe it as “utterly inevitable”. As the years have gone by, and its electoral base in the Republic of Ireland has grown, Sinn Féin's retrospective justification for past IRA activity has changed emphasis. Where  
45 once it was broadly accepted — including by Sinn Féin — that the IRA waged its armed campaign in order to bring about a United Ireland by force, the party now prefers to depict the brutal campaign as an unavoidable historical necessity in the fight for basic civil rights and freedoms for Catholics in Northern Ireland. This canny, if bogus, alteration serves two purposes: it is infinitely more palatable to a modern audience, and it also permits the party to slide past the uncomfortable fact that after a long and bloody conflict a united Ireland has not yet been achieved.

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**Antiracism is too middle-class.** by Remi Adekoya

*An obsession with language ignores the material priorities of Britain's minorities*

29 March 2021. *UnHerd*

5 The video of a white officer calmly kneeling against the neck of a black man, fatally ignoring his pleas for air, was always going to provoke outrage. Yet no one could have quite predicted the scope and intensity of the moral eruption that followed the death of George Floyd. Celebrities, protesters, corporations and governments around the world rushed to condemn racism, vowing to eliminate it for good.

10 Almost 10 months later, the trial of Derek Chauvin, the former Minneapolis police officer charged with murdering Floyd, is about to start. And while nobody promised to eliminate racism in less than a year, enough has happened since Floyd's death for us to ask ourselves an important question: how likely is it that today's antiracist activists will succeed? For the sake of clarity, it is worth noting that even though no racial group has a monopoly on racist views — the idea that skin colour defines the quality of a person — when "racism" is spoken of these days, what is really meant, of course, is white racism. As many have pointed out, that isn't to say that white people cannot be the target of racism. Whitebashing is certainly a thing these days: it is generally safe, even quite trendy, to make all sorts of derogatory comments about "whiteness" under the guise of "speaking truth to power".

15 But we should also acknowledge that in western societies like Britain, the type of racism with the power to limit one's life chances is typically that practised and condoned by white folk. This is partly down to the sheer potency of numbers. I, for example, cannot realistically choose not to worry about the attitudes of Britain's 85% white population towards people of black heritage such as myself. In contrast, a white Brit does not have to be concerned in the same way about what black folk, who constitute just 3% of Britain, think about white people.

20 The existence of that choice is a fundamental difference: one that justifies today's consistent focus on white racism, however repetitive or even unfair it may seem to some white Brits. But does this emphasis make the task of abolishing racism any easier?

25 I am not convinced — not least because today's activists are overly focussed on the non-material sphere of life: on words, on what can and cannot be said, and by whom. This approach to "fixing" the race problem is underpinned by a strong belief in the almost magical power of language. It assumes that the world runs on "narratives", and that language is the only reality. Change the story, and you change everything. All of which means that white racism can be moralised into non-existence with the correct phrasing: that if we frequently mention how exploitative slavery and colonialism were, and how much western nations like Britain profited from them, white citizens will no longer believe that their societies are any better or more advanced than others.

30 This preoccupation with words is partly the ideological outcome of poststructuralist thinking, with its intellectually fashionable emphasis on highlighting how certain accepted "facts" function to reinforce the dominant position of powerful actors — in this case, white westerners. This approach, by its very nature, places great importance on words and how they are used.

35 But the current antiracist emphasis on language is also a consequence of the kind of people driving the race debate. Following the furious fallout from cataclysmic events such as George Floyd's death, antiracism, long a dissident reaction to white discrimination, has now achieved mainstream prominence — and, in the process, has generated its own elite elements. These are usually well-educated middle or upper-class writers, scholars, intellectuals and artists. People whose trade, like mine, is in words and ideas. It is people from this group who the organisers of public debate — chiefly the media — usually call upon to opine on race in Britain, as I am doing at the moment.

40 The disproportionate influence of middle-class authors is, of course, not confined to the race debate. But that does not mean we should ignore its practical consequences. For more often than not, this intellectualist preoccupation with language is accompanied by a tendency to ignore the material priorities of those minorities at the margins of society. Decolonising the curriculum might be something I feel strongly about, considering I work in academia, but I suspect the minimum-wage level might be a more important issue for the black immigrant working the till at Sainsbury's.

45 Indeed, the reality is that only 1 in 3 British workers earn their living either in managerial positions or in jobs generally classified as "professional", namely those requiring a degree-level qualification. This generally applies to all ethnic groups, with Indians being the most likely to work in professional jobs (33%), while Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are the least likely (18%).

50 While there may be racial issues at play here as well, with some minorities perhaps working jobs below their qualifications, this nevertheless offers a picture of the socioeconomic structure of Britain, including minority Britain. More importantly, it shows how the more material priorities of some segments of that society are often obscured in the middle-class dominated race debate. This is not about today's activists holding bad or even consciously selfish intentions, but about the fact that we are all prone to view the world, as well as what most needs to be changed about it, through the lens of our own everyday situation. [...] The sooner we start focussing more on the material side of things, the better.

55 *Dr Remi Adekoya is a Polish-Nigerian writer and political scientist. His book *Biracial Britain: A Different Way of Looking at Race*, is available now.*

## Windrush campaigners tell race commission chief to revise report or stand down, by Nadine White

11 April 2021, *The Independent*

5 A group of prominent Windrush campaigners have urged Dr Tony Sewell to abandon his recent race commission report. In a five-page letter, over 100 signatories, including Patrick Vernon OBE, former deputy London mayor Lee Jasper and survivors of the Windrush scandal, have accused the government-backed Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities of "ignoring" the atrocities wreaked by the Home Office. The letter suggests that the commission is colluding to "deny the experiences" of hundreds of black British citizens who were unlawfully stripped of their right to live and work in the UK.

10 Dr Sewell was widely condemned last week after the commission's report on racial disparities concluded that Britain was not an institutionally racist country and recommended teaching a "new story" of positivity around slavery. "Your report is a dreadful attempt to rewrite history and denigrate it to a footnote. You are effectively denying the true experiences and existences of black people, so that the annals of history will once again favour the oppressors," the campaigners' letter reads.

15 "The origins of these more contemporary injustices are steeped in historic legislation fuelled by people like Enoch Powell, Oswald Mosley and Margaret Thatcher, the latter of whom referred to this country as becoming swamped by migrants. Do you think that these injustices are imagined? People we know have been denied lifesaving medical treatment, lost jobs and houses, have been detained, removed and deported. People we know have died and large numbers are affected by ongoing trauma - an intergenerational trauma. Have you noticed that the victims of the Windrush scandal are mostly people of African and Caribbean descent?"

20 The Windrush scandal is only mentioned twice throughout the 258-page report. It notes that the scandal, which saw numerous black people who had migrated from the Caribbean to Britain detained or deported under Conservative "hostile environment" policies, left this cohort feeling "rightly" let down, but says that "outcomes such as these do not come about by design, and are certainly not deliberately targeted". Addressing this point, the letter's authors write: "The injustices meted out to the Windrush generation are.. well known. Why then is the only reference to the scandal in your report a suggestion that those affected

25 feel let down? Let down? This is not how we would describe it. Lives have been destroyed." The scandal is far from resolved, with the Home Office having paid £6 million to just over 400 claimants - out of a total possible compensation payout of £570m. In a foreword to the report, Dr Sewell says some communities are haunted by "historic" racism, and that there has been a "reluctance to acknowledge that the UK had become open and fairer". The academic, who is himself a descendant of the Windrush generation, concludes: "Put simply, we no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities. The impediments and disparities do exist, they are varied, and ironically very few of them are directly to do with racism. Beneath the headlines that often show egregious acts of discrimination, the Windrush scandal most recently, incremental progress is being made as our report has shown beyond doubt. Through focusing on what matters now, rather than refighting the battles of the past, we want to build on that progress." The letter was organised by leading immigration lawyer Jacqueline McKenzie, on behalf of McKenzie Beute and Pope and the Centre for Migration Advice and Research's Windrush Justice Project. Ms McKenzie has provided legal representation for numerous people affected by the scandal. The campaigners are now urging Dr Sewell to either amend the report or stand down.

40 "We believe that you must revisit your work and examine the data more closely, seek evidence from a wider variety of sources, consult experts in a credible way and start to draw conclusions based on the facts," says the letter. "If you cannot do that, then you should stand down from a commission that is meant to be investigating race and disparity to understand the current issues and how government and society can work together to address them."

The 30 recommendations from the Windrush Lessons Learned Review by Wendy Williams should also be implemented as a matter of priority, the campaigners have said. These include engaging meaningfully with communities to develop policy. Though the commission claims to have spoken to communities as part of its engagement, none of the Windrush campaigners or groups involved in the letter were contacted by Dr Sewell.

45 Ms Williams did not make a definitive finding of institutional racism in the Home Office, following her review of the Windrush scandal, but she expressed serious concern that its failings demonstrated an "institutional ignorance" and thoughtlessness towards race and history which "were consistent with some elements of the definition of institutional racism". In the report, the commission recognises the "wisdom" and lived experience of the Windrush generation and states this "needs to be framed into a message that speaks more about responsibilities, conflict resolution, and the building of bridges".

50

## **The Democrats Will Suffer if They Abandon the Green New Deal**

By Kate Aronoff, *The New Republic*, November 9, 2020,

Did Joe Biden's much-publicized suggestion that he wanted to "transition" off fossil fuels during a presidential debate cost him the election? Evidently not. Biden is projected to flip Pennsylvania with a healthy margin, and he carried fossil fuel-producing states New Mexico and Colorado. Democrats did underperform further down the ballot, though, losing House seats where they were  
5 expected to gain them and floundering in their bid to take control of the Senate, which will remain Republican-dominated unless they can pull off an unlikely victory in a pair of special elections in Georgia. That leaves a divided government that will make the path toward anything like adequate climate action more difficult. With 2022 just around the corner, what will it take to put Democrats back into a position to pass big climate bills?

10 Some elder statesmen have already reached their conclusions. The past week has seen Democrats and Republicans—James Clyburn and John Kasich, Tim Ryan and Mitt Romney—blame the party's lackluster performance on policies like defunding the police, the Green New Deal, and Medicare for All, offering scant evidence that these progressive battle cries actually led to a significant electoral backlash. Meanwhile, establishment types, including the Lincoln Project's cast of grifters, have been  
15 eager to take credit for Biden's victory and historic vote share, now shaping up to be the largest since Ronald Reagan's reelection in 1984. Everything good that happened for Democrats in this election, in other words, was the result of the Democratic Party business as usual. Everything bad was the left's fault.

20 The party's strategy for this election wasn't all that different from its strategy in 2016: point out how dangerous and abhorrent Donald Trump is; keep policy details vague and focus instead on broad topics like "dignity" and "character." That was at least good enough to take back the White House. But what's its plan for when Trump is no longer on the ballot and can't be saddled with a pandemic and recession? [...]

25 It's hard to imagine any messaging at this point could make people believe a Democratic White House will improve their lives enough to be worth voting for, however well climate action and investing in wind and solar power might happen to poll. The burden is on Biden's White House to prove a Democratic Party pursuing emissions cuts can make people's lives better, and it will have to do so under less than ideal circumstances. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is likely to try to block anything that smells like climate policy, much less the more ambitious job creation agenda that Biden campaigned  
30 on. Oil and gas companies continuing to go bankrupt and shed jobs by the thousands will put a Biden administration in a difficult bind: getting blamed for a decline of oil and gas jobs while unable to pass the kinds of broad-based spending packages that could help stop the bleeding. That could spell disaster in 2022, with backlash to energy job losses setting Democrats quickly down the Obama administration's eight-year path of losing control over the House, Senate, and White House.

35 That's not to say Biden will be totally bound by a hostile Senate. But the gargantuan nature of the climate challenge—that is, upending the energetic basis of the global economy—means policies to address it can't be sneaked in around the edges of politics through a few regulatory changes or executive orders. Social democracy is a bare minimum for easing people through that enormous transition and is anathema to both parties' DNA. Whether or not the GOP resolves to give up the ghost of climate denial post-  
40 Trump, it doesn't seem poised to support guaranteeing health care to laid-off oil and gas workers or fiscal support to communities whose tax bases stand to be devastated by an onslaught of bankruptcies. Democrats, for their part, remain mostly ambivalent about enlisting the government too much to create jobs and provide for basic needs, preferring anodyne language about lowering prescription drug prices and defending the Affordable Care Act.

45 The Democratic Party will have to figure out how to deliver real things for people if it wants to avoid a blowout loss in 2022 and preserve hope for climate policy that's remotely in touch with the scale of the problem. Important as a creative and ambitious executive branch is at this point, it'll ultimately take sustained Democratic majorities to bring greenhouse gas emissions down to zero. Historically, Democrats have won those by improving people's lives, as Franklin Delano Roosevelt did after the New  
50 Deal. There's no surefire way that will work this time around, but it's worth trying, given that nothing else seems to be working. They might even manage to save a few thousand lives in the process.



## Anti-Asian Violence in America is Rooted in US Empire

By Christine Ahn, Terry K. Park and Kathleen Richards, March 19, 2021, *The Nation*

If we are to stop anti-Asian hatred in the United States, we must recognize how US foreign policy perpetuates it. Shortly after the mass killing in Georgia—including six Asian women—earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken denounced the violence, saying it “has no place in America or anywhere.” Blinken made the comments during his first major overseas trip to Asia with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, where Blinken warned China that the United States will push back against its “coercion and aggression,” and Austin cautioned North Korea that the United States was ready to “fight tonight.”

Yet such hawkish rhetoric against China—which was initially spread by Donald Trump and other Republicans around the coronavirus—has directly contributed to rising anti-Asian violence across the country. In fact, it’s reflective of a long history of US foreign policy in Asia centered on domination and violence, fueled by racism. Belittling and dehumanizing Asians has helped justify endless wars and the expansion of US militarism. And this has deadly consequences for Asians and Asian Americans, especially women.

Anti-Asian violence through US foreign policy has manifested in the wars that have killed millions, torn families apart, and led to massive displacement; in the nuclear tests and chemical weapons storage that resulted in environmental contamination in Okinawa, Guam, and the Marshall Islands; in the widespread use of napalm and Agent Orange in Vietnam, Laos, and Korea; in the US military bases that have destroyed villages and entire communities; in the violence perpetrated by US soldiers on Asian women’s bodies; and in the imposition of sanctions that result in economic, social, and physical harms to everyday people.

These things can’t happen without dehumanization, and this dynamic has had dire consequences for Asian Americans, especially women. Of the 3,800 hate incidents reported against Asian Americans last year, 70 percent were directed at women. Exoticized and fetishized Asian American women have borne a dual burden of both racism and sexism, viewed on one hand as submissive and sexually available “lotus blossoms” and on the other as manipulative and dangerous “dragon ladies.”

Asian women are particularly harmed by US militarism and foreign policy—economically, socially, and physically. In Korea, women have long been collateral damage from militarized US foreign policy. The 1950–53 Korean War, which killed 4 million people, led to social and political chaos, separated families, and orphaned and widowed millions, creating conditions where women were without homes and work. This forced women into prostitution, according to Katherine H.S. Moon, an expert on US military prostitution in South Korea and author of the book *Sex Among Allies*. Over a million Korean women have worked in “camptowns” that surround US military bases in South Korea. This system of military prostitution was controlled by the South Korean government and supported by the US military in order to strengthen military alliances and prop up the South Korean economy. Yet the women were stigmatized, “destined to invisibility and silence,” according to Moon.

These camptowns not only facilitated the immigration of thousands of Korean “war brides” to the United States, but also transported the system itself. As the US military steadily reduced its troop presence in Asia, camptown establishments, facing social upheaval and economic uncertainty, began sending their madams and sex workers to US domestic military sites through brokered marriages with US servicemen. Many of these exploited Korean women arrived in the US South, a region housing many domestic military bases, which saw the proliferation of military prostitution. By the 1980s, the Korean American sex trade would spread from these Southern military towns to elsewhere in the United States—including the Atlanta metropolitan area, site of Tuesday’s horrific mass shooting. We see this anti-Asian violence now manifesting in ramped up US aggression toward China and the ubiquitous US military presence throughout the Asia-Pacific region. According to American University professor David Vine, there are approximately 300 US bases in the Asia-Pacific region circling China, which along with “aggressive naval and air patrols and military exercises, increases threats to Chinese security and encourages the Chinese government to respond by boosting its own military spending and activity.” The military buildup is raising regional military tensions, and increasing the risk of a deadly military clash or what should be an unthinkable war between two nuclear-armed powers.

If we are to successfully stop anti-Asian hatred here in the United States, we must recognize how US foreign policy perpetuates it and end US militarism and wars throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The Biden administration could start by formally ending the Korean War, which cost nearly \$400 billion (in 2019 dollars) to fight, and continues to be a source of justification for military-centered policies by the United States, South Korea, Japan, and others in the region. As we address violence against Asians and women and dismantle white supremacy here at home, we must also fundamentally reorient US foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region away from domination and control and toward true human security for all.

**English people must fight for Scotland's democratic rights – or sacrifice their own.** by Michael Chessun  
*If we let Boris Johnson ignore the mandate for a second referendum, he'll come for our civil liberties next*

12 May 2021, *Opendemocracy*

5 Barely anyone on the English Left seems to have grasped the gravity of the situation emerging from the May 2021 elections. As the Labour Party contemplates its bleak results, all eyes are now on the precarity and inadequacy of the party's leadership. A year ago, the party's incoming leader, Keir Starmer, promised to continue Jeremy Corbyn's radical domestic agenda, marrying it with competence, electoral success and a nod to Labour's overwhelmingly pro-European base. The reality has been rightward drift, silence on Brexit, and electoral disaster followed by a series of shambolic maneuvers in which Starmer accidentally started a party civil war by sacking his deputy Angela Rayner from her role as party chair, before later claiming to have promoted her.

10 The really historically significant thing about these elections, however, was not the fact that Boris Johnson got to pose in front of a giant inflatable version of himself on Hartlepool's seafront, or Labour's increasingly fraught and incoherent internal debate about the Red Wall, but the result in Scotland. Falling just one seat short of an overall majority, Nicola Sturgeon is now at the head of a strengthened pro-independence majority in the Scottish Parliament, with the SNP and Greens holding 72 out of 129 seats between them. This means that we are about to enter a period of sharp contestation  
15 between the Scottish and UK governments over Holyrood's right to hold a referendum. There is much to be said about what this means for Scotland, but this will be a crucial test for progressives in England, too.

20 For five years, when Corbyn led Labour, the English Left threw everything into an electoral project to the exclusion of almost anything else. It is now in a period of existential crisis, unable to break with its addiction to parliamentary leadership and trapped in a relentless focus on high politics, polling figures and D-list celebrity drama with a diminishing sense of power and agency. Its instinct will be to regard the battle between Sturgeon and Johnson – as it gets drawn out through negotiations and the courts – as a sideshow, and it will be disinclined to mobilise around it. There is even a possibility that the Labour Party at Westminster could continue to oppose a referendum in spite of the 2021 election result. Both of these prospects should be cause for alarm.

25 Growing up in Edinburgh in the 2000s as the SNP was first on the rise, I would always cringe when Scotland – which joined the union willingly, was never colonised by England and enjoyed the spoils of the British Empire – was touted by less subtle backers of independence as an oppressed nation, comparable to Ireland. But questions of national oppression become live when nations are denied their right to self-determination, and that is precisely what the  
30 Conservative government now intends to do to Scotland. Few outsiders would have spoken of Catalonia as an oppressed nation prior to 2017, but that changed when Madrid sent in the army to crush Catalonia's independence referendum in October of that year and then threw members of its democratically elected government in jail. The British state prides itself on its status as a stable, tolerant democracy, but lurking within the framework of all multinational states – especially those with such a dominant central nation – there is a capacity for oppression against even the most prosperous, well-  
35 established periphery. [...]

The battle between basic democratic rights and the conservative and unionist tradition has raged throughout Britain's modern existence, but it is now reaching a new crescendo, inflected with a resurgent right-wing nationalism that claims to speak for the whole of Britain while openly traducing, and frequently suppressing, large parts of it. Our political class  
40 loves this country, but only as an old, white, nostalgic idyll – and an increasingly English one. Just as it once was in the 1970s and 1980s, when the labour movement was a genuine threat to the status quo, the only way that large parts of the UK – whole nations, whole cities, whole communities, whole generations – can be brought into line with the Tories' agenda (or simply contained) is with a campaign of authoritarianism and gerrymandering.

45 The job of the Left is to connect these dots – and to understand that the dispute over Scotland's right to hold a referendum is really about the rights of all of us. The unspoken contradiction at the heart of the emerging constitutional crisis is that the Scottish government simultaneously calls Boris Johnson a cheating illiberal populist and, formally speaking, fully expects him to respect the result of the Holyrood elections. The reality will obviously be messier – and it is in that mess that mass movements and ordinary people on both sides of the border have agency to push, pressure and cajole. When  
50 the Left mobilises against the Policing Bill, and in the fights that are to come over the post-COVID settlement, Scotland's right to self-determination must be on its banners.

**Broken Trust: the crisis at the heart of the National Trust.** by Charles Moore  
5 June 2021. *The Spectator*

When Tim Parker announced his resignation as chairman of the National Trust last week, it was a first. Since it was founded in 1895, the Trust has endured many controversies, but until now the shared acceptance of its founding purposes has seen it through. The very first meeting proposed a body 'for the holding of lands of natural beauty and sites and houses of historic interest to be preserved intact for the nation's use and enjoyment'. The National Trust continued thus ever since, enforced by Acts of Parliament. This unity of purpose as a conservation organisation enabled it to become the owner of more than 600.000 acres of land and 200 historic houses, with nearly six million members — the greatest heritage organisation in the world.

Yet Mr Parker's position proved vulnerable. In early April, a body called Restore Trust, which had been privately preparing since January, went public. As its name implies, it wants the Trust to return to its original principles. Restore Trust immediately attracted thousands of members, tens of thousands of pounds and lively contributions to its website in which members, volunteers and former staff reported, to coin a phrase, 'lived experience' about the dismaying changes taking place.

Restore Trust drew up resolutions for the Trust's AGM in October. The first expressed no confidence in Mr Parker and called for his resignation. A few days after this appeared in the press, his departure was announced. How did it come to this? Acute symptoms surfaced last year. The difficulties caused by Covid were genuine and great — shutting down NT properties, sacking staff, losing membership (it is now falling towards five million, despite 25 per cent discounts) and £227 million of budgeted revenue. The Trust's 'volume strategy' of pursuing ever-higher membership numbers left it exposed. Yet the charity's leadership chose this grim moment to join the culture war. In August, an internal paper attacked the very idea of country houses ('the outdated mansion experience') and their gardens. It called for the Trust to move from being 'asset-led' to 'audience-led', as if it were not the assets which attract the audience.

The Trust dismissed the leaked paper as a mere discussion document, but in fact such thinking was already embedded, and remains so. If you click on 'Our cause' on its official website, you will find a 'climate change hazard map' well before anything about the Trust's properties. Its 'Strategy for 2025' proclaims 'our renewed commitment to diversity and inclusion and playing our part to create a fair, equal society, free from discrimination'. No mention of the words 'historic', 'houses', 'gardens' or 'works of art'.

In September came a published document — the interim report, 'Addressing our histories of colonialism and historic slavery'. Announcing it, John Orna-Ornstein, the Trust's 'director of culture and engagement', said 'We're not here to pass judgment on the past': yet the report did just that. Indeed, it had done so without writing a sentence, by its prior decision to treat 'colonialism' (tendentious word) as being on a par with slavery. So Winston Churchill's Chartwell or Rudyard Kipling's Bateman's was approached in the same way as houses built from slave profits. The report was heavily footnoted, but largely with references to highly ideological approaches by writers like Madge Dresser, Eric Williams and David Olusoga. It was sometimes inaccurate. The main editors of the interim report were the Trust's chief curator, Dr Sally-Anne Huxtable, and Corinne Fowler, a professor (of postcolonial literature, not history) at the University of Leicester. Professor Fowler is the author of *Green, Unpleasant Land*, a title suggesting active hostility to the aims and membership of the National Trust. If the land is unpleasant, why would the Trust wish to care for it or members want to visit it?

It may not be an accident that the Trust's moving spirits in this — Dr Orna-Ornstein, Dr Huxtable and the curatorial and collections director, Tarnya Cooper, co-authors of the report's introduction — previously worked in the publicly funded museums sector, which was 'woke' before the Trust. They have an agenda all right, but little experience of an organisation paid for by members, who have rights and interests which it is wrong to ignore.

I wondered at the time why, on such a contentious subject, the Trust felt it must issue an 'interim' report. Surely historical scholarship should not be rushed out unfinished during a plague? My anxiety was confirmed by the Trust's well-intentioned director-general, Hilary McGrady, in a long interview with Jeremy Paxman. Focused on Covid cuts, she admitted, she had lacked the 'bandwidth' to deal with the slavery report but was 'under massive pressure to get it out'. Why? From whom? When the report hit controversy, Dr Huxtable tweeted: 'For me, now is transformational time for the whole of society, and that includes the Trust.' By 'now', she seemed to mean the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the ensuing propaganda pile-on to British institutions by Black Lives Matter. [...] At last year's virtual AGM, Tim Parker made a similar error. Questioned by a member about BLM, he described it as 'a human-rights movement with no party-political affiliation'. No one had said it was a *party*-political organisation. It is, nevertheless, wholly, violently political, and wholly unconnected with the care of Britain's heritage. By letting it set the NT's agenda, Mr Parker and colleagues abandoned their stewardship of the charity's purposes.

**Winchester College and the sad demise of all-boys boarding schools.** by Charlie Peters

9 March 2021, *The Spectator*

5 There are just four remaining all-boys boarding schools in the UK. From September, there will be three: Winchester College has announced that it will start taking girls in the sixth-form. Girls will join the sixth-form as day pupils in a 50-50 split and are expected to be offered boarding places from 2024. Some have said that it's about time schools like Winchester got with the times. In fact, for Wykehamists like me, this announcement which breaks a legacy going back 640 years is a great pity.

The all-boys boarding education that Winchester College offers has stood the test of time and it continues to flourish in all areas. Yet by opting to become co-educational, Winchester is in danger of becoming yet another mixed-sex independent school.

10 The school has defended its move as a chance to 'diversify' Winchester and open opportunities to more avenues. It will do the opposite. If Winchester truly wishes to broaden opportunities and access, then it should continue to add to its commendable, sizeable bursaries mission in one particular direction: working-class boys.

15 Winchester declined an offer in 2019 of a £1m scholarship donation to support disadvantaged white boys. This was a regrettable decision. Privately-educated British boys will have their minds swelled by the broad diversity of their international peers, from the west coast of the US through to the Far East. But they are less likely to meet and learn from less fortunate boys closer to home. The addition of similarly privileged girls will do little to diversify Winchester life. The girls are likely to have had near-identical upbringings, with similar cultural experiences and lifestyles. By contrast, the provision of a first-class education to bright but disadvantaged boys would bring significant divergent thinking.

20 'It's the whole alpha male ethos which is propagated in a single-sex boys' school environment which concerns me,' wrote Annabel Heseltine in the *Daily Telegraph*. 'Boys run in packs... You only have to watch them on a rugby field and or hear the joshing over a sports tea afterward.'

25 There is no rugby at Winchester. We play our own game instead. And this is not the only area where the school diverges from the traditional public school set. Fears of an 'alpha male ethos' could not be more wrong when discussing Wykehamists. Most of those I met in my school days are not brash, loud, or aggressive. Winchester is scholarly, publicly shy, and quietly self-assured. Rishi Sunak's recent rise has been met with scorn from some of my fellow Old Wykehamists who think he is 'showing off' or 'acting like an Etonian'.

30 The college is a gentle place, where coolness is not defined by membership of the top football or cricket teams. Indeed, coolness does not seem to matter at all, as many of the boys are almost disturbingly bookish. In my first year, I met a student who kept a dictionary in a cage and 'fed it' cabbage. I am quite sure that he enjoyed five years of education untainted by any 'alpha male ethos'.

35 It is a deeply strange but beautiful place packed with self-effacing boys who prize academic scholarship and friendly collegiality above all else. Their formative years have not been hit by the nervousness afflicted on young men by the constant presence of girls. Boys are free to be boys. This is where lifelong friendships are made, where self-worth is developed, where camaraderie and mutual support underpin all aspects of school life. Boys can express themselves intellectually, emotionally and creatively without feeling self-conscious. There are plenty of mixed schools — there is only one Winchester College.

40 But with this move, Winchester will never be the same again. The atmosphere will permanently shift, and the kind of boy it both attracts and produces will move with it. For the many parents in Britain and around the world who want the choice of an all-boys boarding education for their son, just a handful of destinations — the likes of Harrow, Eton and Radley — remain.

Harrow, now headed by Winchester's inspirational former Master in College Alastair Land, writes on its website:

*'Although we never pretend that single-sex school is the only way to educate someone, it does help to prolong childhood in a very healthy way, enabling children to express themselves intellectually, emotionally and creative without feeling self-conscious.'*

45 This opportunity is especially precious for boys, for whom intellectual, emotional and creative expression can be more difficult to foster. Its loss at Winchester is a great shame.

## Anger Can Build a Better World

By Myisha Cherry, August 25, 2020, *The Atlantic*

Black Lives Matter protests are not anti-American, but as American as one can get.

Racism is alive in our society. It lives in store aisles, discriminatory 911 calls, policing, the racial wealth gap, and asymmetrical government responses to communities afflicted by COVID-19. Through protest, diverse voices are boldly standing up to racial injustice. And they are expressing anger while doing it. This rage is not a distraction, nor is it destructive to American ideals. It is playing a crucial role, politically and morally, in helping us build a better country. The purpose of rage is not to make white people feel guilty. Rather, it communicates the value of Black lives and egalitarian principles. Anger, in this way, is not antithetical to love. It expresses compassion for the downtrodden and the desire for a better world. Anger at racial injustice makes people eager to do something about it. We cannot suppress anger, nor should we dress it up in the garments of respectability politics. The anger we are witnessing at Black Lives Matter protests is more than emotional identity politics. Protesters' anger signals that Black folks have moral worth and should be respected. It says that while the system may not hold Black people in high regard, those risking psychological discomfort, infection, and arrest do. This anger dignifies Black children who might have begun to think that their skin tone was a death sentence. It proclaims that Black lives do, in fact, matter.

Anger further expresses how much the protesters treasure justice. In June, the author and activist Kimberly Jones argued for the necessity and power of Black Lives Matter protests, saying the nation is "lucky that what Black people are looking for is equality and not revenge." It is easy to see this statement as a threat. But Jones is underscoring that Black people's anger asserts the values we all claim to hold dear in a liberal democracy. Black people and their allies are simply striving, through their anger, to advertise these shared values of equality and the necessity of putting them into practice. Outraged protesters uphold principles no different from those articulated in the founding documents. They just want them applied universally across the population. This makes their anger not anti-American, but as American as one can get. Anger not only demands that things change; it proclaims that change matters. And when change is absent, anger reminds us of its need to exist. [...] Anger motivates us to fight against injustice and for those at the margins. In Portland, anger fuels the protesters' willingness to stare injustice in the face. Rather than discounting their anger, we must hear the love and compassion they are expressing with it. By consistently showing up, building walls of protection, facing tear gas, and getting arrested, they are communicating concern, care, and respect for Black people.

When faced with something as persistent and destructive as racism, we might think that things will never change and that we cannot change them. But anger can make people optimistic about the future and increase their self-belief. A 2014 study found that angry people think they are going to prevail no matter the circumstances. Anger makes them believe that they are powerful and capable. This effect, in turn, makes angry people less risk-averse, which is evidenced in how protesters from around the world are fighting for change at the risk of police violence and illness.

When I originally saw the footage of George Floyd's death, my heart was broken, not only because a Black man was dying before my eyes, but because I had seen so many of these videos before. So many cries like Floyd's have been ignored. But my anger refused to allow me to despair. As much as anger is a response to past events, it is also forward-looking. Anger makes us believe that we can shape a new, more just world. It is a source of hope, one that propels the struggle against seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

For those skeptical of anger's power and usefulness, it is important to note that anger at racial injustice does not cause poverty, inadequate housing, a police state, or dehumanizing practices. Anger responds to these atrocities. Many refuse to believe this, because to them, anger is always irrational, undemocratic, and synonymous with violence. So they fear it. However, anger is a legitimate response to wrongdoing. It challenges us to achieve political equality. And we can have anger without violence, and violence without anger.

Still, some people might prefer to remain afraid of rage, the racial bodies who express it, and the change it has the potential to bring about. But they should know that fearing anger will teach them nothing. Listening to it, seeking to understand it, and allowing oneself to be challenged by it will. To those who continue to embrace and express anger, despite insincere attempts by others to control it, thank you for responding to racism with rage. This matters, particularly when so many find comfort in rationalizing, ignoring, or wishing away racism. Your fury is needed to awaken our consciousness, and to create a more perfect union.

*Myisha Cherry is Assistant professor of philosophy at the University of California, Riverside, author of the forthcoming book The Case for Rage: On the Role of Anger in Anti-racist Struggle.*

**If election was 'wildly successful,' what's the truth behind so-called secure voting bills?**  
The Editorial Board, *USA TODAY*, February 11, 2021

Trump so pervasively insinuated election fraud, legislators in nearly 30 states have offered proposals that would actually restrict ballot box access.

By any measure, the presidential election of 2020 was a resounding success. More Americans voted than ever — a full two-thirds of the electorate, the largest percentage turnout since 1900. Despite the burden posed by those numbers, Homeland Security committees tasked with safeguarding the election called it "the most secure in American history." And reviews at the time by then-President Donald Trump's attorney general and Republican and Democratic election officials from every state but Texas (which declined to respond to a survey) found no evidence that fraud or irregularities played any part in the election of Joe Biden. And all of this success unfolded amid the worst pandemic in 100 years. Sounds a lot like a democracy that ain't broke. So why have legislators across 28 states offered to fix our voting system with more than a hundred bills this year that would restrict access to the ballot box?

Three words: the Big Lie. Trump used his baseless claim that the presidential election was stolen to gather his supporters at a rally outside the White House Jan. 6, where he urged them to march on the Capitol, and the result was his impeachment trial for incitement of an insurrection.

Republican legislators for years have used so-called secure voting laws to suppress balloting by minorities, the poor, the elderly and college students who may not typically choose GOP candidates. The Big Lie opened legislative floodgates. Because Trump repeated it like a mantra for months after the election, the confidence of Republican voters in the nation's election system was shaken to its core — fertile ground for laws to crack down on ballot access.

The result? A groundswell of legislative proposals to curtail mail voting, widely expanded during the pandemic; limit ways for people to register to vote; allow voter-roll purges that strip out legitimate voters; tighten voter ID requirements; and ban drop boxes for absentee ballots.

In Georgia, for example, where a record number of absentee ballots were cast in a state Biden narrowly won, proposed legislation would reverse the practice of allowing voting by mail without a specified excuse. Among those favoring this is Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, who resisted pressure from Trump to alter voting results and defended the integrity of the state's voting process. "Georgia had a wildly successful and smooth election," Raffensperger wrote for *USA TODAY* in November. The moves by Republican legislators to restrict voter access come as the GOP — against nearly all objections — picked up a dozen seats in the House of Representatives and gained control of two state legislatures and a governorship. And for his part, Trump received more votes than any Republican presidential nominee in history, incumbent or otherwise. It's just that Biden received 7 million more votes. And yet Trump so pervasively insinuated his Big Lie on social media, at rallies and on television that by January, 76% of Republicans were convinced he had been cheated of victory.

The good news is that the participatory successes of November have created momentum for making it even easier for citizens to vote. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, more than 400 new or carried-over bills in 35 states would, among other things, expand mail and early in-person voting; ensure drop boxes for absentee ballots; allow automatic voter registration in circumstances such as when people interact with a state Department of Motor Vehicles; and reform ways for voters to correct technical mistakes on mail ballots.

And more could be done to instill even greater confidence in the process. The universal implementation of paper balloting would guard against computer error. Comprehensive post-election audits could be more broadly implemented, along with greater opportunities for citizens to observe ballot counting in person or through livestreaming. Reforms to the way mail-in ballots are counted could provide more accurate election night results.

Most important, truth needs to prevail over the Big Lie. The lesson of Nov. 3 is that the world's oldest democracy has the potential for an even brighter future.

**Bernie Is Right. We Should Immediately Expand and Improve Medicare**  
By Michael Lighty, *Jacobin*, April 16, 2021

We've reached a critical point in the campaign to win Medicare for All. For the first time in a decade, the decisive health care question is on the table in Congress: Should we continue with the commercial health insurance system, or should we improve and expand Medicare? Should we make the expanded subsidies for purchasing commercial insurance permanent, as Democratic leaders like Nancy Pelosi prefer, or should we lower the eligibility age for Medicare, while covering dental, hearing, and vision and capping all out-of-pocket spending at \$2,000 per year, as Bernie Sanders proposes?

The choice is not wholly satisfactory. In order to achieve the cost savings, eliminate the denials of care, and guarantee health care to all, we really need (an improved) Medicare to cover everybody. Expanding Medicare does not eliminate the profits and waste of the status quo. (The Congressional Budget Office estimates that Medicare for All would save \$650 billion per year versus the current system as organized under the Affordable Care Act [ACA- also called Obamacare].) Most important, an age-based expansion would leave over one hundred million residents of the United States at the mercy of employer-provided health benefits.

But unfortunately, Medicare for All isn't yet winnable. Expansion is. And Sanders's age-based approach would bring in those whose station in life has made them especially vulnerable to the health care industry, while also contesting the commercial insurance alternative and exposing the Democratic Party's deference to the health care industry. It would get us qualitatively closer to Medicare for All.

Advocates for expanding the ACA system claim that it is the best way to get more health care for the dollar — an astonishing position given the level of profits that insurers have raked in during the pandemic (including \$12.4 billion for UnitedHealth), none of which have gone to a single case of patient care. With Medicare administration outlays at 2 percent and commercial insurance expenditures at least 12 percent (plus profits), it's clear which is the more efficient way to deliver health care. We need to eliminate the commercial insurers. Centrist Democrats like to say that we should protect what we have and build on it, touting the strategy as the safe political path. But how safe is that path if it doesn't solve the problem? How safe is it if average workers continue to suffer and see politicians do nothing about it? Health care costs continue to rise above other key indicators, including GDP growth and Consumer Price Index rates. The average individual deductible for employer-provided insurance is \$1,644, up from \$917 in 2010. Hospitals and insurance companies can charge whatever they want, and both have anti-trust exemptions, so collusion is rampant. Higher prices mean higher profits. The ACA tax subsidy is hugely beneficial to insurance companies, a boon to hospitals who rely on commercial insurance — and devastating for rural and urban hospitals serving working-class communities. Corporate hospital chains have closed dozens of hospitals in the last decade alone.

The ACA has failed to control costs, while boosting industry profits and underwriting continued denials of care (nearly one in five claims submitted to ACA exchange plans are denied annually). The ACA has increased out-of-pocket costs and limited patients' choice of providers. How is maintaining that model politically wise? On top of that, expanding ACA subsidies only deepens the competitive disadvantage of companies that pay for employee health benefits (as nearly all union employers do) and makes winning collective bargaining agreements and new organizing drives more difficult. By contrast, extending Medicare eligibility to younger workers could give union-bargained plans a new lease on life — reducing costs by 25 percent or more. Pro-business Democrats are willing to make these trade-offs. Millions of people have gotten coverage (though mostly through an expansion of Medicaid, not private insurance); thousands of lives have been saved; and the Democratic leadership has been able to avoid embarrassing political fights.

Poor and working-class people haven't been so lucky: a Lancet Commission report identified 461,000 "excess" US deaths in 2018 above the median for comparable countries with national health care. In a recent report, Public Citizen identified hundreds of thousands of COVID-19 deaths that could have been avoided if the United States had a Medicare for All system. These deaths were concentrated in predominately black and brown neighborhoods of essential workers, and among those with chronic conditions exacerbated by the lack of health care. Continuing to subsidize private insurers perpetuates their murderous business model. It is time to stop propping up the current system. It is time to stop "fixing" the ACA. The best way to save lives is by guaranteeing health care to all through an improved and expanded Medicare — and putting us one step closer to Medicare for All.

*Michael Lighty was Healthcare Constituency Director for Bernie Sanders' campaign in 2020.*

5 **Nicola Sturgeon's personality cult may mean she will ultimately face the same fate as Margaret Thatcher**

Alastair Stewart, *The Scotsman*, May 11, 2021

Former Scottish Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said Scots disliked Margaret Thatcher because "she was a woman, she was an English woman, and she was a bossy English woman. [They] could probably put up with one of these but three simultaneously was a bit too much."

0 When Thatcher died in 2013, some of the scenes in Scotland were embarrassing. People too young to have lived through her policies were cheering in Glasgow's George Square. It was an apt summation of Scotland's serious cognitive dissonance and preference for pop-culture history as reflected in Rifkind's assessment.

5 Scottish politics is unusually replete with old ghosts. Winston Churchill is alive and well as a hero or bogeyman (depending on who you ask). But this dodgy cultural memory has bled through and impacts real life. Modern political debate, particularly on social media, is about personalities and pastiche with little patience for actual policies.

With more than a little irony, Nicola Sturgeon now finds herself facing the same fate as Churchill and Thatcher despite, but also because of, her recent election victory.

She's derided and praised with equal force. Her innocence, guilt or competence is contingent on who you ask, seldom the facts. We've done away with subtlety – a politicised electorate is a good thing, but a blind one is dangerous.

0 And the SNP have a problem: Sturgeon is the guardian of independence now. The party made their entire 2021 election campaign about her. Independence is the issue, strong and stable leadership throughout the Covid-19 crisis a justifying support act.

After the Alex Salmond controversy, the SNP demonstrated a remarkable, nay Conservative, ability to cast former leaders aside if it meant saving the agenda. As Conservative writer Robin Harris remarked, no self-respecting Conservative loves the party, it's a means to an end.

5 And it's true for Sturgeon. Anthropomorphising independence into one person is the worst possible strategy for the party ahead of a second independence referendum. "At least she's not Boris" might be an election-winning strategy, but it's not the basis for independence in itself. The Scottish Conservatives putting Ruth Davidson front and centre was no argument for the Union, either.

0 When the First Minister appeared before Holyrood's Salmond inquiry committee, some Scottish Conservatives called on her to resign before she had given evidence. She testified for eight hours and #IstandwithNicola was trending during the proceedings despite legitimate concerns being raised about her government's conduct.

5 Scottish politics never looked worse that day because it was a loaded dice for supporters and detractors alike. The SNP have made Nicola Sturgeon a figurehead, but have not yet armed her with the specifics of what independence would cost, look like and how long it would take.

And if they repeat the Scottish Parliament election strategy at an independence referendum – it's not the party, it's all about Nicola – it could very well fail. It's the same mistake that cost Thatcher the leadership. Her policies and disposition jeopardised the Conservatives' electoral fortunes in the end.

0 There is no five or ten-year plan for Scotland after independence. The tired excuse that "well, Brexit didn't have that, so why do we need to do the same?" is self-destructive.

[...] Sturgeon's popularity and appeal are not the same as support for independence. The conflation is deadly. The two do not necessarily translate, just as support for the SNP did not mean a 'Yes' win in 2014. It is a mistake to think the SNP are the guardians of the independence movement, but it is a bigger mistake to rest the campaign and arguments on the shoulders of one person.

5 Scots are a reactionary bunch by nature. The more people push, the more we push back. The more politics is made about one person, the more personal, aggressive and unproductive it becomes.

The question really fleshed out in this year's election is what kind of politics do we want to see going forward? At the moment, it feels at an all-time low for anyone who reads social media comments. Politics should not be only about independence – that cannot be the defining structure in which we all operate.

0 We are not a presidential system, we need hardworking constituency MSPs, and the new emphasis on 'leaders' is misleading and ultimately self-defeating.

5 Once there was discord and disagreement, but now there is perpetual vitriol. Post-truth is an irritating cliché, but when everyone metaphorically adopts the Roman legionaries' testudo formation, they are bound to suffer cognitive dissonance. The risk to the Union or losing the independence vote is the same – no one trusts the other side's figurehead to tell them the truth. This is the worst possible time for personality cults.

*Alastair Stewart is a freelance writer and public affairs consultant.*



## Utterly dishonest Boris Johnson is on borrowed time

By Euan McColm, *The Scotsman*, May 30 2021

5 The whole damned thing is grotesque. While almost a third of children in the UK live in poverty, we are invited to believe that our Prime Minister gave the go-ahead to the £90,000 refurbishment of his Downing Street flat without once pausing to ask who'd be picking up the bill.

0 It is further suggested we accept there was nothing untoward about a situation which saw a Tory donor pay initial costs for the project only for Boris Johnson to later settle up. And we are - in this nation where a woman who might need benefits to help raise a third child is forced to prove that this child was conceived through rape - asked to consider Johnson's behaviour entirely ethically sound.

5 The publication on Friday of a report by Lord Geidt - the PM's adviser on minister's interests - into the facts surrounding the revamp of the Government flat Johnson shares with his fiancée Carrie Symonds might offer comfort to Johnson's acolytes who continue, bafflingly, to place their faith in a man whose only dependable characteristic is his utter dishonesty. Geidt, after all, clears Johnson of breaking the code of conduct. But the report's contents further advance the case that Johnson is absolutely unfit for the office he holds.

0 Geidt states that Johnson acted "unwisely" by not being more "rigorous" in finding out who had funded the refurbishment of the Downing Street flat. That, I suppose, is one way of putting it. Perhaps you recall the scene in the House of Commons a few weeks back when Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer repeatedly asked the PM whether someone other than himself had "initially" paid for the redecoration of the flat. Johnson was furious, replying that Starmer should know that "I have paid for the Downing Street refurbishment personally."

5 Turns out, according to Geidt, that much of the bill was initially paid by Conservative Party vice-chairman Lord Brownlow. His lordship, however, found "no evidence" that Brownlow told Johnson that he had personally settled any bills. Johnson, then, is cleared of wrongdoing by a report that confirms he was unable to give Starmer a straight answer during questioning over the matter.

0 Geidt was appointed by Johnson after the resignation from the role of standards adviser of Sr Alex Allan. Allan had found, during an earlier investigation, that Home Secretary Priti Patel had behaved towards staff in a manner that could be "described as bullying". Johnson's response to that troubling report was to double down on his support for Patel. Unsurprisingly, our amoral PM is happier to accept the findings of an adviser who finds no wrongdoing. Geidt's report topped off another vintage week for the worst Prime Minister in living memory.

5 Two days earlier, Johnson's former chief adviser Dominic Cummings appeared in front of a committee of MPs to answer questions about the Government's handling of the Coronavirus crisis. During a session lasting more than seven hours, Cummings dropped bombshell after bombshell. Declaring Johnson unfit for the position he holds, he claimed the Prime Minister had initially dismissed Covid as "just a scare story" and suggested that England's chief medical officer Chris Whitty could inject him with the virus live on television to prove it was nothing to get het up about. Cummings also said Health Secretary Matt Hancock should have been sacked for at least 20 reasons, including "lying to everybody on multiple occasions in meeting after meeting in the cabinet room and publicly". Initially, said Cummings, the Prime Minister favoured a "herd immunity" approach to dealing with the virus, which should be allowed to rip through the country.

0 In the aftermath of Cummings' appearance in front of committee members, Tory MPs unleashed a co-ordinated response. Cummings had been dismissed as a liar when he tried to justify his decision to break lockdown rules last year and drive his family from London to County Durham so why should he be treated as a reliable witness now? The slight flaw in this line was that those same Tory MPs had rallied round Cummings over his lockdown-breaking trip, insisting he had done nothing wrong. But we do not need Dominic Cummings to tell us Boris Johnson is unfit for office. The Prime Minister had repeatedly shown us that this is so.

5 While a journalist, he was fired for lying and this tendency towards dishonesty has flourished during his political career. Johnson may have led the successful Brexit campaign in 2016 but his passion for leaving the EU was entirely bogus. He did not back Brexit because he thought it best for the UK but because he believed that, by doing so, he would maximise his chances of becoming Prime Minister. Johnson knew all that stuff about taking back control and investing in the NHS and striking exciting new trade deals was bullshit but he played along because the realisation of his ambitions was more important to him than the prosperity of the nation he now leads.

0 One day, it is to be hoped, all of this will matter. But, for now, a depressing number of people continue to agree that, rather than being naked, Emperor Johnson is dressed in the finest clothes. [...]

5 **This Australian trade deal shows how 'Global Britain' has already lost its way**

Rafael Behr, *The Guardian*, May 21, 2021

10 You can tell that British farmers will be betrayed by Boris Johnson by the way he promises to look after them. The prime minister has pledged support equivalent to forfeited European subsidies. He says the sector will be safe from cut-price competition when new free trade deals are signed. He has told Minette Batters, president of the National Farmers' Union, that he would "rather die" than hurt her members. Really? Death before cheap beef? Maybe Johnson can honour those pledges, but it would be out of character.

15 It would also defeat the purpose of Brexit for many Tory MPs. "Take back control" signalled many things to voters, but to Eurosceptic ideologues it meant liberation from the EU's common external tariff. Having trade policy run from Brussels was proof of Britain's colonisation by continental bureaucrats. Deals with non-Europeans are the prize for emancipation.

20 That is why Liz Truss, the trade secretary, is determined to secure a zero-tariff agreement with Australia in time for next month's G7 summit in Cornwall. The economic benefits would be marginal – shifting the growth dial by 0.02% over 15 years. But as a trophy for the "Global Britain" chest it is priceless. Other ministers – Michael Gove at the cabinet office and the environment secretary, George Eustice – fret about the impact on domestic producers who cannot compete with Australian mega-farms. Welsh and Scottish rural communities are especially vulnerable. Ministers who worry about the future of the union fear a fresh pot of nationalist grievance brewing.

25 Johnson's instincts are with the libertarians. His promises to farmers are as reliable as the assurances he once gave businesses in Northern Ireland that Brexit would erect "no barriers of any kind" to trade across the Irish Sea. He lied. The prime minister likes to be the giver of good news, and will satisfy that appetite (in himself and his audience) sooner than serve unpalatable truth.

30 The deal with Australia will be done. UK farmers will be told they have nothing to fear because current food safety standards will still apply and tariffs will be phased out gradually. Agriculture will continue in the British countryside, but its scale and character will change over time. Competition will generate new rural businesses and bankruptcies. That is how markets are supposed to work in the free-trade Brexit model – a stimulus to innovation; creative destruction. Tory MPs tend not to phrase it that way to farmers in their constituencies.

35 The Australian deal will be most consequential in setting expectations for what might be conceded when the time comes to do a deal with Washington. That is the holy grail of post-Brexit deals. Cabinet rows over antipodean livestock are just a rehearsal for a battle that will erupt when US demands land on the table.

40 The underlying tension is between the electoral tactics that delivered Brexit and its ideological genesis. Johnson's appeal to his party is rooted in Euroscepticism as an agenda for deregulation and buccaneering adventure on the high seas of globalisation. His Commons majority was won by appealing to voters whose economic and cultural demands point inwards, to a policy of Britain-first protectionism. In campaign mode, Johnson managed to package that as one coalition. Government requires choices that pull it apart.

45 [...] It is a story that Brexiteers tell to justify a move that looks historically misjudged and outdated. The Eurosceptic idea of Britain as a global hub and free-trade evangelist was conceived in a different era. It is a hybrid of imperial nostalgia and late-20th century market utopianism. It took a generation for Tory acolytes of that cult to achieve their total victory in English politics, by which point the rest of the world had moved on.

50 The US has no reason to indulge Johnson's fantasies. A cosmetic trade deal to make Brexit look clever is not a priority for Joe Biden. He is interested in rehabilitating a transatlantic alliance that Donald Trump vandalised, to which end Britain's insistence that it is something other than European is unhelpful: economic vanity and geopolitical stupidity.

55 Johnson has never been one for diplomacy, perhaps because it involves tact and relationships built on trust. His speeches rarely contain foreign policy or even references to other countries, except as caricature or metaphor. "As Saudi Arabia is to oil, the UK is to wind," he told last year's virtual Tory conference. It was the only glimpse of a world beyond British shores. The only reference to the EU was a false accusation that Labour is "scheming" to rejoin the bloc. There was no mention of the US, China, Russia, India or Africa.

Johnson's agenda is more parochial than he likes to imagine. He does not weigh trade deals in terms of jobs or growth but as rhetorical props in the great Brexit showcase. Who will pay for the production is an issue for later. For now, "Global Britain" is a performance put on for a domestic audience by a prime minister with his back turned to the real world.

*Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist*

### Half of women in UK fear equality is going back to 1970s

- 5 *Impact of pandemic has fallen unequally on women, leading to calls for strategy to restore balance*  
Alexandra Topping, *The Guardian*, 8 March 2021

Women across the UK have issued a “desperate cry for help”, with more than half believing that women’s equality is in danger of going back to the 1970s at work, at home and in society, according to an exclusive survey.

- 10 After a year that has seen women more likely to be furloughed, lose their jobs, carry the burden of home schooling and domestic drudgery, women are increasingly fearful about their futures, with almost half of those surveyed in a Mumsnet poll for International Women’s Day expecting gender equality to go into reverse over the next few years.

- 15 As children return to school in England, the poll reveals that women have borne the burden of closures, with 70% of mothers with male partners doing all or most of the home schooling. Three-quarters of women said that during lockdown it was easier for their partner to work uninterrupted (echoing findings from the Institute of Fiscal Studies), one in five mothers in paid work said they had reduced their working hours to cope with increased childcare, and more than a third said their careers had been affected in a way that was not true for their partner. “This survey paints a fairly depressing picture of how gender inequality has been exacerbated during the pandemic, with women really struggling to cope,” said Mumsnet founder Justine Roberts.

- 20 “What’s needed is a proper women’s strategy, with specific policies to redress the inequality that’s been triggered by Covid, or we’re at real risk of heading right back to the 1970s with regard to women’s economic power.” One mother whose partner could not work from home said she had been fully responsible for home schooling, despite also working. “I have never before felt so absolutely annoyed at being a woman,” she said. Another said  
25 she had been a full-time mother, employee and teacher, writing: “I am broken and am unable to do my best in any of the three full-time jobs I now seem to hold.”

- The poll also exposes the UK’s domestic care gap, with 73% of respondents saying they did all or most of the laundry, while 62% did the food shopping and 61% did all or most of the cleaning and tidying up. The only domestic areas approaching parity were children’s bath and bedtimes and pet care, while 51% said their partner  
30 was the most likely to empty the bins.

- There were some glimmers of hope, with 63% of respondents saying their family unit was closer as a result of the pandemic. While 69% said their partner had spent more time with the children, 43% said their partner had developed a greater understanding of the demands of childcare, and 24% of the partners of those polled were more likely to take on domestic tasks.

- 35 After a year of carrying more of the burden at home, women are “on the edge, and they don’t know what to do”, said Joeli Brearley, founder of *Pregnant Then Screwed*. An “SOS line” opened by the group to give women a chance to leave voicemails about their experience had been inundated with women articulating “desperate cries for help”, she said.

- In audio extracts from the recordings, one woman is heard simply saying: “Please, please make it stop, I just can’t keep going”, while another says, “It’s depressing and frightening, to be honest.” An edited version of the voicemails ends with a woman saying: “No, I’m sorry, Mummy is done, absolutely done.”

- Brearley said *Pregnant Then Screwed* had given 30,000 women some form of legal advice during the pandemic. “Women are asking how they pay their bills, how can they look after a baby entirely on their own, how can they hold down a job and home-school – they are saying they just can’t cope anymore,” she said.

- 45 Felicia Willow, chief executive of the Fawcett Society, accused the government of ignoring mounting evidence of a crisis in gender equality, and called for a drastic change of approach.

- “It’s like we’re on this freeway heading in the wrong direction, and we keep missing the exits,” she said. “We urgently need investment in childcare, we need employers reporting on sex-disaggregated redundancies data – we need a really serious focus on women. But without women in the room, without women in positions of power,  
50 it is just not going to happen.

*Alexandra Topping is a senior news reporter for the Guardian, focusing on gender and equality*

**Just what we needed, a new strain of nationalism – the vaccine kind**

*It's a tribute to the ingenuity of the human spirit that the UK and the EU can still come up with new sources of bitter dispute*

Marina Hyde, *The Guardian*, January 29, 2021

5

How are you enjoying the vaccine wars? The EU's meltdown at the UK is one of those rows that turns you into the grimace-face emoji. I've now held that expression for three straight days, presumably along with the other 500 million-odd citizens who just want to get home but whose parents are fighting on the pub floor. Guys ... please?

10

There is a true coach-crash quality to the EU's reaction to being outfoxed by the UK on vaccine procurement. The commission's pram has been dramatically emptied of all its toys. It's like watching an endlessly patient and mild-mannered social studies teacher finally lose it and head-butt a pupil for beating him in a quiz. Oh, sir ... I appreciate you've had to deal with some awful behaviour from this particular individual over the past few years, but I'm afraid ... this is not acceptable.

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[...] For now, it's hard not to wince at reports the EU could block millions of doses of coronavirus vaccine from entering Britain. Let's hope this is a conflict that de-escalates in a hurry, and not the shape of things to come. After the past few years around the globe, it's such a tribute to the human spirit that we can still discover new types of nationalism. The latest variant is vaccine nationalism, which – like all the other nationalisms – is grim and ends badly.

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Vaccine-wise, it encourages the haves to act graciously towards the have-nots. No doubt history will judge the merits of the Treaty of AstraZeneca, which the EU seems to regard as the most incendiary dotted line since Versailles. For now, thank heavens for the quiet dignity of Her Majesty's press, as Britain's front pages have spent much of the week blaring out observations such as "ANOTHER SHOT IN THE ARM FOR BRITAIN", "EU WHAT?", "UNION VACC", and "NO, EU CAN'T HAVE OUR JABS". At the current rate of triumphalism, we're only days off "WE HOPE EU ALL DIE OF BUREAUCRACY" and "FINE, WE'LL GIVE YOU OUR VACCINE SCRAPS BUT WE'RE ANNEXING FRANCE AS A HOLIDAY HOME".

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Naturally, we all have to play our part. Despite the German government reportedly being set to refuse the AstraZeneca jab for use in the over-65s, I myself have taken the axe to a lighthearted joke about saving Germans in the higher age categories, having just discovered that the second world war in fact ended a full SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, and that there's just a small chance a gossamer quip about that nation's nonagenarians is neither fair, helpful or even tasteful. Which, as any regular readers will know, are the three absolute lodestars of this column.

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If only the government's wins were not being assaulted from its own benches. Consider New Forest West MP Desmond Swayne, who really is the opposite of a vaccine success story. He's the opposite of a cerebral success story, all told, having closed 2019 defending his use of blackface, and ended 2020 claiming to an influential anti-lockdown and anti-vaxx group that NHS Covid figures "appear to have been manipulated". ICUs were "actually operating at typical occupation levels for the time of year", Desmond bullshitted, and the UK was "bouncing round at the typical level of deaths for the time of year". The sort of claim that typically sparks two questions. 1. Have you recently suffered a blunt-force head trauma? 2. Would you like to?

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Hardly a surprise that Desmond has become quite the hero to antivaxxers and "Covid sceptics". This week the campaign group Hope Not Hate revealed that last November Swayne opted to appear on the notorious Richie Allen Show, an online radio programme that regularly hosts antisemites and conspiracy cranks, and featured a Holocaust denier on the very same episode.

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Despite being asked to apologise and retract his entirely inaccurate and dangerous nonsense by both Michael Gove and Priti Patel this week, Desmond has blithely refused. As he put it while appearing on the radio show of fellow lockdown septic Julia Hartley-Brewer: "We are getting very close to thought crime." No we're not, you daft snowflake. We're not even in the same landmass as thought crime. We have, however, pulled in at the station of malevolent imbecility, where you have left the train in the company of a Holocaust denier, Piers Corbyn and people who think Bill Gates got the jab so he can track himself. In short, you're a Windsor-knotted, contrast-collared conspiracy froter with a grasp of science inferior to even Gwyneth Paltrow's. I hope I've got close to thought crime there – if not, hit me up. I have more.

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Bizarrely, Swayne still has the Tory whip. The prime minister expelled his own hero Winston Churchill's grandson from the Conservative party for simply voting against him on Brexit, but has kept this New Forest show pony even as the latter willingly becomes a hero to the most dangerous anti-vaxxers at a time of deadly pandemic. Johnson should get rid.

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Honestly, if you can't spaff an eightieth of your majority on a guy so iniquitously undermining the nation, there's something rather wrong.

*Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist.*

**Former impeachment manager sues Trump for ‘incitement to riot,’ terrorism and other charges related to the Capitol attack,** Nicolas Fandos, *The New York Times*, March 5, 2021.

5 A House Democrat who unsuccessfully prosecuted Donald J. Trump at his impeachment trial last month sued him in federal court on Friday for acts of terrorism and incitement to riot, attempting to use the justice system to punish the former president for his role in the Jan. 6 assault on the Capitol. The suit brought by Representative Eric Swalwell, Democrat of California, accuses Mr. Trump and key allies of inciting the deadly attack and conspiring with rioters to try to prevent Congress from formalizing President Biden’s election victory. And like the case laid out in the Senate, which acquitted him, it meticulously traces a monthslong campaign by Mr. Trump to undermine confidence in the 2020 election and then overturn its results.

10 “The horrific events of January 6 were a direct and foreseeable consequence of the defendants’ unlawful actions,” asserts the civil suit, filed for Mr. Swalwell in Federal District Court in Washington. “As such, the defendants are responsible for the injury and destruction that followed.” 15 Though not a criminal case, the suit charges Mr. Trump and his allies with several counts including conspiracy to violate civil rights, negligence, incitement to riot, disorderly conduct, terrorism and inflicting serious emotional distress—findings that could severely tarnish his legacy and political standing. If found liable, Mr. Trump could be subject to compensatory and punitive damages; if the case proceeds, it might also lead to an open-ended discovery process that could turn up information about his conduct and communications that eluded impeachment prosecutors.

20 In addition to the former president, the suit also names as defendants his eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., his lawyer Rudolph W. Giuliani and Representative Mo Brooks, Republican of Alabama, who led the effort to overturn Mr. Trump’s election defeat when Congress met on Jan. 6 to formalize the results. All three men joined Mr. Trump in promoting and speaking at a rally in Washington that day, which Mr. Swalwell says lit the match for the violence that followed.

25 A majority of the Senate, including seven Republicans, voted to find Mr. Trump “guilty” based on the same factual record last month, but the vote fell short of the two-thirds needed to convict him. Even Republicans who voted to acquit him, like Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the minority leader, concluded that Mr. Trump was culpable for the assault. Many Republicans argued that the Senate simply lacked jurisdiction to punish a president no longer in office, and said the courts were the proper venue for those seeking to hold him accountable.

30 The lawsuit adds to Mr. Trump’s mounting legal woes. Another Democratic congressman, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, has already filed suit on similar grounds in recent weeks with the N.A.A.C.P. Prosecutors in New York have active investigations into his financial dealings, and in Georgia prosecutors are investigating his attempts to pressure election officials to reverse his loss.

35 In a statement, Jason Miller, an adviser to Mr. Trump, blasted Mr. Swalwell as a “a lowlife with no credibility” but did not comment on the merits of the case. Mr. Giuliani and spokesmen for Mr. Brooks and Donald Trump Jr. did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

40 Both Mr. Thompson’s suit and Mr. Swalwell’s rely on civil rights law tracing to the 19th century Ku Klux Klan Act, but their aims appear to differ. The earlier suit targets Mr. Trump’s association with right-wing extremist groups, naming several groups as defendants and explicitly detailing racialized hate it claims figured in the attack. Mr. Swalwell focuses more narrowly on the alleged scheme by Mr. Trump and his inner circle.

45 During the Senate trial, Mr. Trump’s defense lawyers flatly denied that he was responsible for the assault and made broad assertions that he was protected by the First Amendment when he urged supporters gathered on Jan. 6 to “fight like hell” to “stop the steal” he said was underway at the Capitol.

50 Nicholas Fandos is congressional correspondent, based in Washington. He has covered Capitol Hill since 2017, chronicling two Supreme Court confirmation fights, two historic impeachments of Donald J. Trump, and countless bills in between.

## Down With the British Monarchy

*Any nation that still has a monarchy in 2021 is proving itself to have a mortifying lack of revolutionary gumption.*  
Hamilton Nolan, *The New York Times*, March 9, 2021

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A recent interview you may have heard about revealed that the British monarchy is a toxic den of backbiting and racism. And who would doubt it? There is nothing easier to believe than that an institution created to be the physical embodiment of classism is awash in inhumanity. Where the public response to this humdrum revelation has gone astray is in the widespread conviction that we should make the monarchy *better*. Not at all. You cannot

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turn a bottle of poison into a refreshing drink, no matter how much sugar you pour into it. A just and proper response to what we have learned would be for the entire United Kingdom to come together, join hands in a great circle around the institution of the monarchy and burn it to the ground, while singing "Sweet Caroline," to maintain a positive spirit. Then the members of the royal family can sweep up the ashes and deposit them neatly in the bin, a ceremonial beginning to a new life of working for a living.

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The existence of a monarchy is an admission that a government can't, or doesn't care to, solve people's problems. Instead, it offers spectacle. It has always been easier to elevate one family to a fairy-tale life of luxury than to do the dreary work of elevating every single family to a decent standard of living. The common people fund the lifestyle of a tiny, exalted and thoroughly unworthy elite, rather than the other way around. Any nation that still has a monarchy in 2021 is proving itself to have a mortifying lack of revolutionary gumption.

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America is guilty of many crimes against humanity, but this is one thing we got right. Our presidents may be national embarrassments, but at least Americans are not required to scrape and bow before some utterly random rich wastrel whose claim to legitimacy is being the child of the child of the child of someone who was, centuries ago, the nation's biggest gangster. Yes, we have our own hypnotic capitalist addiction to celebrity, but monarchy is something altogether more twisted — as if the Bush family, the Kardashians and the Falwells were all rolled

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into one bejeweled quasi-religious fame cult, topped off with a bracing dose of imperialism. What is a monarchy if not the highest veneration of inequality? Based not on moral worth but on accidents of heredity, a small group of people are lavished with millions of dollars skimmed from the public till and are worshiped as sentimental nationalist gods, in exchange only for performing the duty of "being pleasant in public," which they do with mixed success.

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More than 60 million citizens, many of them living in poverty, are instructed to celebrate rather than to loathe this tableau of excess. They are told to be happy that *someone* has a dream life, even if it is not them, and to live vicariously through this soap opera cast of royals, rather than demanding equality for everyone else. The crown would greatly appreciate if you tune in to this show rather than spending your time reading Karl Marx.

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And that plan appears to be working: More than four in five British adults have a positive view of the queen. The appeal of fancy hats is hard to overcome.

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The stars of this insipid show will change with time. New princes and princesses will be born, opulent weddings will be had, different coddled butts will get their turn to sit on the cushioned throne. These machinations, each of them designed to occupy the public's attention for a while, are just the scrambling of termites atop the enormous nest that is the monarchy itself. It feeds on the vigor of the working people and regurgitates it into a giant home for itself.

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Abolishing the monarchy shouldn't be too tricky. First you take away their homes. Then you take away their wealth. Then you take away their titles. All of those things properly belong to the public, and those squatters have held them for far too long.

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The good news for the royal family is that the economy seems to be on the rebound. It shouldn't be too hard for them to find jobs, even considering their lack of practical experience. They could get honorable jobs at a Tesco market. What a wonderful opportunity for them to earn an honest living, for the first time in their lives. As our social betters often tell the rest of us, hard work is good for self-esteem. I expect that they will soon be happier than ever.

*Hamilton Nolan is a writer for In These Times magazine.*

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**When Amazon Raises Its Minimum Wage, Local Companies Follow Suit**, Ben Casselman  
and Jim Tankersley, *The New York Times*, March 5, 2021.

5 New research suggests that when big companies increase wages, they drive up pay in the places where they operate—without a notable loss in jobs.

Amazon has embarked on an advertising blitz this winter, urging Congress to follow the company's lead and raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. American workers "simply can't wait" for higher pay, the company said in a recent blog post.

10 In the areas where Amazon operates, though, low-wage workers at other businesses have seen significant wage growth since 2018, beyond what they otherwise might have expected, and not because of new minimum-wage laws. The gains are a direct result of Amazon's corporate decision to increase starting pay to \$15 an hour three years ago, which appears to have lifted pay for low-wage workers in other local companies as well, according to new research from economists at the University of California, Berkeley, and Brandeis University.

15 The findings have broad implications for the battle over the federal minimum wage, which has stayed at \$7.25 an hour for more than a decade, and which Democrats are trying to raise to \$15 by 2025. For one, the research illustrates how difficult it can be for low-wage workers to command higher pay in the modern American economy—until a powerful outside actor, like a large employer or a government, intervenes.

20 Most directly, there is little evidence in the paper that raising the minimum wage would lead to significant job loss, even in low-cost rural areas, a finding consistent with several recent studies. Other research, including a recent report from the Congressional Budget Office, has found a larger negative effect on jobs, although still smaller than many economists believed in the past.

25 The authors of the latest study—Ellora Derenoncourt of Berkeley and Clemens Noelke and David Weil of Brandeis—studied Amazon, Walmart and Target, which operate in areas where wages tend to be low. But even in those places, the researchers found, wage increases by the large corporate employers appear to drive up wages without driving down employment.

"When you have major changes in the wage policies of large actors in the labor market, this has ripple effects," Dr. Derenoncourt said in an interview.

30 At the same time, Dr. Weil added, "the sky doesn't fall."

The researchers used the federal government's Current Population Survey, supplemented by evidence from the online job posting site Glassdoor, to estimate what happened in communities where Amazon, Target or Walmart operate after those companies increased entry-level wages in recent years. What they found in many ways confounds traditional economic models: Raising pay did not put the large

35 companies at a disadvantage. Instead, it gave local workers a reason to push their own employers for a raise. (...) Many people are skeptical of Amazon's motives in pushing the federal \$15-an-hour effort, noting that the company faces scrutiny from Democrats over its treatment of workers, accusations that it has stifled competition and its moves to fight unionization.

40 Other business groups accused Amazon of using its scale and political influence to squeeze smaller competitors. "Amazon is clearly doing very well in the current economy," said Misty Chally, executive director of the Coalition of Franchisee Associations, which represents franchise owners. But gyms, hair salons and many other businesses that compete with Amazon are "all struggling to stay in business right now," she said.

45 Mr. Dube said he had concerns about the power of companies like Amazon and Walmart. But the upward pressure they put on wages, he said, wasn't one of them. The "Amazon effect" on wages comes as no surprise to organizers of the Fight for \$15 campaign. From its start in 2012, the movement sought to put pressure on private employers, not just elected officials. The two fed each other, said Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, which has backed the campaign: Minimum-wage increases in big cities encouraged companies like Walmart and Target to raise pay nationwide,

50 which in turn prompted more minimum-wage increases and helped fuel the effort to raise the federal wage floor. Policies like Amazon's are particularly significant in places where the minimum-wage argument has never gained much of a foothold, like the South.

"It shifts the politics of minimum wage in those corners of the country," Ms. Henry said. "It busts the myth it can't happen here."

**Why the Equality Act Matters For Our Family—And For Many Others Across America, Marie Newman and Evie Newman, *Time*, March 3, 2021**

5 More than five years ago, before my daughter Evie Newman transitioned, she came to her parents one day upset. She had been experiencing anxiety and deep depression but was unable to identify the cause of her pain. Out of complete frustration and at just 14 years old, she thought there were only two solutions to put an end to it. “I can either kill myself or I can run away,” she told me. As a mother, my heart was broken. This was only an eighth-grader, barely a teenager, who felt so worthless in this world she would rather not live in it altogether.

10 The next day, Evie enrolled in a local day program to help her cope and better understand what she was feeling. One night after her program, the typically timid Evie perked up in her chair at the dinner table, excited to share some news. “I think I figured it out,” she proclaimed. “I’m not a boy, Mom. I’m a girl. And my name is Evie Newman.”

15 In too many households, this news could drive a parent to throw their own child out of their home. This is a nation where 33% of young people experiencing homelessness are members of the LGBTQ+ community. But for us, it was one of the happiest days of our lives. Evie had found her authentic self. She no longer had to wake up every day pretending to be someone she wasn’t. She wanted to live, and she found out who she wanted to live in this world as.

20 Nonetheless, both of us knew this would not be easy, and we are writing this because our experience is the experience of too many American families. Evie was going to grow up in a nation where, in more than 25 states, she could be discriminated against merely because of who she is. She was joining a community where at least two-thirds of the members experience discrimination in their personal lives. From that day on, she could be thrown out of restaurants, evicted from her apartment, and denied access to education and other public services. This was her new reality. One where each and every day, she

25 could face hateful, vile attacks—verbal and physical—for simply existing. That’s why, when Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia devoted her day to arts and crafts so she could hang a transphobic sign on the wall directly across the hall from my office door, neither of us was surprised. She was no different from the bullies Evie dealt with in middle school. If anything, the only real surprise was that these childish actions were coming from a sitting member of Congress.

30 And yet, we’re used to it. From the religious right’s loud cries of so-called discrimination against people of faith to conservatives’ fear-mongering that female transgender student-athletes will now have a physiological advantage over cisgender women—we have heard it all. And contrary to Greene’s bigoted sign (“There are TWO genders: Male & Female. Trust the science!”), the reality is that the Congresswoman is not in fact “trusting the science” or even listening to the more than 100 faith-based

35 organizations that support the legislation. Then again, a member of Congress throwing out red herrings to justify hate and discrimination is nothing new. We know that signing the Equality Act into law won’t change Greene’s beliefs any more than putting a trans-gender flag outside her office door would. But that was never the point. This has always been about ensuring millions of Americans who have been neglected for centuries are now heard loud and clear. By passing the Equality Act we can make sure that

40 LGBTQ+ Americans are not only recognized by their government but also afforded the same civil rights already extended to others across the nation. We made progress on Feb. 25 when the House passed the legislation on a 224-206, near party-line vote, with only three Republicans voting for it with all Democrats. Now, in the Senate, the Act faces a bigger hurdle; where 10 Republicans would need to support it to avoid a filibuster. Families like ours cannot afford for this legislation to fail. We cannot

45 allow more young Americans to believe that the only two answers to the question of who they are as a person is suicide or abandonment.

We need to make the Equality Act law to show millions of Americans that their government accepts them and will protect them for who they are and who they want to be.



**How Conspiracy Theories Are Shaping the 2020 Election—and Shaking the Foundation of American Democracy**, Charlotte Alter, *Time*, September 10, 2020

5 Kelly Ferro is a busy mom on her way to the post office: leather mini-backpack, brunet topknot, turquoise pedicure with a matching ombré manicure. A hairdresser from Kenosha, Wis., Ferro didn't vote in 2016 but has since become a strong supporter of Donald Trump. "Why does the news hate the President so much?" she says. "I went down the rabbit hole. I started doing a lot of research."

10 When I ask what she means by research, something shifts. Her voice has the same honey tone as before, and her face is as friendly as ever. But there's an uncanny flash as she says, "This is where I don't know what I can say, because what's integrated into our system, it stems deep. And it has to do with really corrupt, evil, dark things that have been hidden from the public. Child sex trafficking is one of them."

15 Ferro may not have even realized it, but she was parroting elements of the QAnon conspiracy theory, a pro-Trump viral delusion that began in 2017 and has spread widely over recent months, migrating from far-right corners of the Internet to infect ordinary voters in the suburbs. Its followers believe President Trump is a hero safeguarding the world from a "deep state" cabal of Satan-worshipping pedophiles, Democratic politicians and Hollywood celebrities who run a global sex-trafficking ring, harvesting the blood of children for life-sustaining chemicals.

20 None of this is even remotely true. But an alarming number of Americans have been exposed to these wild ideas. There are thousands of QAnon groups and pages on Facebook, with millions of members, according to an internal company document reviewed by NBC News. Dozens of QAnon-friendly candidates have run for Congress, and at least three have won GOP primaries. Trump has called its adherents "people that love our country." In more than seven dozen interviews conducted in Wisconsin in early September, from the suburbs around Milwaukee to the scarred streets of Kenosha in the aftermath of the Jacob Blake shooting, about 1 in 5 voters volunteered ideas that veered into the realm

25 of conspiracy theory, ranging from QAnon to the notion that COVID-19 is a hoax. Two women in Ozaukee County calmly informed me that an evil cabal operates tunnels under the U.S. in order to rape and torture children and drink their blood. A Joe Biden supporter near a Kenosha church told me votes don't matter, because "the elites" will decide the outcome of the election anyway. A woman on a Kenosha street corner explained that Democrats were planning to bring in U.N. troops before the

30 election to prevent a Trump win. It's hard to know exactly why people believe what they believe. Some had clearly been exposed to QAnon conspiracy theorists online. Others seemed to be repeating false ideas espoused in *Plandemic*, a pair of conspiracy videos featuring a discredited former medical researcher that went viral, spreading the notion that COVID-19 is a hoax across social media. (COVID-19 is not a hoax.) When asked where they found their information, almost all these voters were cryptic:

35 "Go online," one woman said. "Dig deep," added another. They seemed to share a collective disdain for the mainstream media—a skepticism that has only gotten stronger and deeper since 2016. The truth wasn't reported, they said, and what was reported wasn't true.

40 This matters not just because of what these voters believe but also because of what they don't. The facts that should anchor a sense of shared reality are meaningless to them; the news developments that might ordinarily inform their vote fall on deaf ears. They will not be swayed by data on coronavirus deaths, they won't be persuaded by job losses or stock market gains, and they won't care if Trump called America's fallen soldiers "losers" or "suckers," as the Atlantic reported, because they won't believe it. They are impervious to messaging, advertising or data. They aren't just infected with conspiracy; they appear to be inoculated against reality. Democracy relies on an informed and engaged public responding

45 in rational ways to the real-life facts and challenges before us. But a growing number of Americans are untethered from that. "They're not on the same epistemological grounding, they're not living in the same worlds," says Whitney Phillips, a professor at Syracuse who studies online disinformation. "You cannot have a functioning democracy when people are not at the very least occupying the same solar system." American politics has always been prone to spasms of conspiracy. The historian Richard Hofstadter famously called it "an arena for angry minds." In the late 18th and early 19th centuries,

50 Americans were convinced that the Masons were an antigovernment conspiracy; populists in the 1890s warned of the "secret cabals" controlling the price of gold; in the 20th century, McCarthyism and the John Birch Society fueled a wave of anti-Communist delusions that animated the right. More recently, Trump helped seed a racist lie that President Barack Obama was not born in the U.S.

**Texas and Other States Ease COVID-19 Rules Despite Warnings, Paul J. Weber and Tammy Webber, *Time*, March 3, 2021**

5 Texas on Tuesday became the biggest state to lift its mask rule, joining a rapidly growing movement by  
governors and other leaders across the U.S. to loosen COVID-19 restrictions despite pleas from health  
officials not to let their guard down yet. The Lone Star State will also do away with limits on the number  
of diners who can be served indoors, said Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who made the announcement  
at a restaurant in Lubbock. The governors of Michigan, Mississippi and Louisiana likewise eased up on  
10 bars, restaurants and other businesses Tuesday, as did the mayor of San Francisco.  
"Removing statewide mandates does not end personal responsibility," said Abbott, speaking from a  
crowded dining room where many of those surrounding him were not wearing masks. "It's just that now  
state mandates are no longer needed." A year into the crisis, politicians and ordinary Americans alike  
have grown tired of rules meant to stem the spread of the coronavirus, which has killed over a half-  
15 million people in the United States. Some places are lifting infection control measures; in other places,  
people are ignoring them. Top health officials, including the head of the Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention, have responded by begging people repeatedly not to risk another deadly wave of  
contagion just when the nation is making progress in vaccinating people and victory over the outbreak  
is in sight. U.S. cases have plunged more than 70% over the past two months from an average of nearly  
20 250,000 new infections a day, while average deaths per day have plummeted about 40% since mid-  
January.  
But the two curves have leveled off abruptly in the past several days and have even risen slightly, and  
the numbers are still running at alarmingly high levels, with an average of about 2,000 deaths and 68,000  
cases per day. Health officials are increasingly worried about virus mutations. "We stand to completely  
lose the hard-earned ground we have gained," CDC director Dr. Rochelle Walensky warned on Monday.  
25 Even so, many Americans are sick of the shutdowns that have damaged their livelihoods and are eager  
to socialize again. An Indianapolis-area bar was filled with maskless patrons over the weekend. In  
Southern California, people waited in lines that snaked through a parking lot on a recent weekday  
afternoon for the chance to shop and eat at Downtown Disney, part of Disneyland. (The theme park's  
rides remain closed.) And Florida is getting ready to welcome students on spring break. "People want  
30 to stay safe, but at the same time, the fatigue has hit," said Ryan Luke, who is organizing a weekend  
rally in Eagle, Idaho, to encourage people to patronize businesses that don't require masks. "We just  
want to live a quasi-normal life." Michael Junge argued against a mask mandate when officials in the  
Missouri tourist town of Branson passed one and said he hasn't enforced it in his Lost Boys Barber  
Company. He said he is sick of it. "I think the whole thing is a joke honestly," he said. "They originally  
35 said that this was going to go for a month and they have pushed it out to indefinitely. ... It should have  
been done a long time ago." In San Francisco, an upbeat Mayor London Breed announced that California  
gave the green light to indoor dining and the reopening of movie theaters and gyms.  
"You can enjoy your city, right here, right now," she said from Fisherman's Wharf, one of the city's  
biggest tourist attractions. She added: "We are not where we need to be yet, but we're getting there, San  
40 Francisco." Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves said he is getting rid of most mask mandates and lifting most  
other restrictions, including limits on seating in restaurants, starting Wednesday. "The governor's office  
is getting out of the business of telling people what they can and cannot do," the Republican said.  
Florida, which is getting ready for spring break travelers to flock to its sunny beaches, is considered to  
be in an "active outbreak," along with Texas, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, New Jersey, New York,  
45 Rhode Island and South Carolina, according to the data-tracking website CovidActNow.  
Florida Gov. Rick DeSantis made it clear during his annual State of the State address Tuesday that he  
welcomes more visitors to Florida in his drive to keep the state's economy thriving. Florida  
municipalities can impose their own mask rules and curfews, restrict beach access and place some limits  
on bars and restaurants, but some have virtually no such measures in place. Miami Beach will require  
50 masks indoors and out and restrict the number of people allowed on the beach as well as in bars and  
restaurants. "If you want to party without restrictions, then go somewhere else. Go to Vegas," Miami  
Beach City Manager Raul Aguila said during a recent virtual meeting.

## Marcus Rashford's Campaign Isn't An Inspiration – It's A Tragedy

Nadine Batchelor-Hunt, *Huffington Post*, 23 October 2020

There is no doubt that Marcus Rashford is a hero. A 22-year-old playing professional football for his country, after growing up in child poverty is an incredible story. And, despite the ad hominem attacks by Tory MPs in Parliament – accusing Rashford of being a celebrity merely “virtue-signalling” – he has kept his head held high, expertly highlighting the humanity deficit in British politics by rising above their attempts to politicise poor children.

Indeed, I myself grew up in child poverty on a council estate in Birmingham, and relied on free school meals at various points during my childhood to get by, so I know, first-hand, how vital they are. That's why the necessity of Rashford's campaign horrifies me. That a footballer has to lead a campaign to feed hungry children because his government refuses to, that struggling businesses are stepping in to give what little they have to help our nation's kids, is not and must not be seen as a victory for humanity – it's a tragedy.

We are currently facing the biggest global recession in history. Businesses up and down the country are struggling to weather the storm, and millions find themselves completely left out by the government's economic support. And it is now these businesses that are having to step in to provide food for starving children with what little they have left.

We're also seeing underfunded local councils and authorities stepping forward such as Manchester and Birmingham – Rashford and I's cities respectively – to try and help. These are areas that have publicly, and, at times, explosively, stated that they need more financial support than the government is offering to prevent a spike in poverty during the pandemic. Because, like Covid-19, child poverty in the UK is a national crisis.

At present, 4.2 million children live in relative poverty in the UK – with 2.4 million in absolute poverty. It is becoming such an issue that the UN described it as “systemic and tragic” in 2019 – and that was before the economic crisis we're in now.

The government was failing our nation's children even before the pandemic hit. But now they have compounded their moral bankruptcy by choosing to continue to ignore them. These children cannot vote, do not have a platform, and cannot speak for themselves. Indeed, it is this that led Rashford to say: “For as long as they don't have a voice, they will have mine.”

So, when I see Rashford tweeting constantly over the course of the last 24 hours with various places across the country that are offering to feed children, I can't help but feel despair that this is happening in the sixth wealthiest nation in the world. So, while I support Rashford's campaign, and all those sacrificing what little they have to help children, I also despair at its necessity. How is it that a 22-year-old footballer has more humanity than the House of Commons? And my despair is deepened by the rhetoric coming out of the government during this bleak and desperate time.

Conservatives presented arguments against feeding children in the run up to the vote on free school meals, saying they can't “nationalise children”, “create dependencies”, “wreck” the economy, or “take responsibility from parents”. Not only are these statements disingenuous, barefaced lies, they completely overlook the fact that 72% of children living in poverty are in working households. And have they forgotten that the state has a responsibility to ensure there is food for children, as outlined under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

[...] Scotland this year announced its intention to enshrine the convention in Scots law, which would make it illegal for the government to stand idly by in the face of child food poverty. Nicola Sturgeon has announced that children will continue to be fed over the holidays, as well as the policy of parents being provided with £10 food vouchers per child.

Let's be clear: Rashford's campaign is an emergency measure to prevent a catastrophe of the government's making. Unlike the Conservative government, the Scottish Parliament show how the rights of children should not be an ideological game or political football; these are children's lives, and futures.

Statistics show that children in food poverty have worse outcomes; from malnutrition, to the ability to concentrate in the classroom, food insecurity has serious long-term social, economic, and health consequences. And, as Rashford says, child food poverty “is never the child's fault”.

So, while I support Rashford's campaign, and all those sacrificing what little they have to help children, I also despair at its necessity. We must make sure the government do not see the kindness of the British public as an opportunity to continue their shameless and wanton negligence of their responsibilities to the nation's children. Because, let's be clear: Rashford's campaign is an emergency measure to prevent a catastrophe of the government's making. The enduring, structural change we need can only come from the top – from a government that puts the lives of children before their ideologically toxic and morally bankrupt approach to child food poverty.

*Nadine Batchelor Hunt is a freelance journalist.*

## Is Scotland On Its Way To Independence?

Alasdair Lane, *Forbes*, May 11, 2021

In Scotland last week, a yawning political fissure widened. Undeterred by apocalyptic — or, perhaps, simply Scottish — conditions, my country took to the polls. Our task was to elect a national parliament; but at stake was something of immeasurably deeper meaning. Independence.

The result, now tallied, has the governing Scottish National Party (SNP) in first place, short of outright control, but commanding a pro-independence majority with help from the Greens. It is, to be honest, a slightly muddled picture, but two things are clear: Scotland is now on an inexorable, if unpredictable path to a second referendum on leaving the United Kingdom, and no one knows which way that vote will go. No one, indeed, even knows when that vote will come. Nicola Sturgeon, SNP leader and Scotland's first minister, has vowed to hold 'IndyRef2' by the end of 2023. In light of the pro-independence majority, that pledge will now become policy, pitting the Scottish leader against her London counterpart, Boris Johnson.

It promises to be quite the showdown. A sworn enemy of Scotland's independence movement, Prime Minister Johnson has long ruled out a rerun referendum — a position, Sturgeon believes, that'll shift in recognition of last week's vote.

Fat chance. While Scotland's 2014 secession ballot (which the nationalists lost by a 10-point margin) came hot on the heels of a pro-independence parliamentary majority, Johnson has shown himself an uncompromising political operator, battle hardened by his bloody-minded pursuit of Brexit. There's a healthy helping of hubris at play too: he will not be the man who lost Scotland.

And so, lacking Westminster's permission, the SNP plans to go it alone, pushing its own IndyRef2 bill through the Scottish parliament. It's a bold move designed, in part, to incite a legal challenge from the UK government. Whether Scottish lawmakers have the legislative competence to sanction a secession vote, the Supreme Court would then have to decide.

It's a judgement that could go either way, numerous legal and constitutional experts have told me. For large swathes of Scotland's nationalist camp, this sort of uncertainty simply isn't good enough. "Sturgeon has to get things sorted," a passionate independence campaigner said to me yesterday. "We've won this election, we've got our mandate for another referendum. No more of these two, three, four, five year plans that rely on the go-ahead of London judges. We need a second vote now."

[...] [But] after a lengthy spell of growth, support for independence has plateaued at around 50%, polling suggests. Last week's election result bears this out — the vote share was split almost perfectly between secessionist and pro-union parties, and there's clear evidence of tactical voting along constitutional lines.

This goes a long way to explain why Sturgeon has ruled out an unsanctioned 'wildcat referendum', like the one staged by Catalonia's pro-independence government in 2017. Though some on the nationalist fringes endorse such strident action, a ballot of dubious legality would alienate precisely the voters their movement is trying to convince.

Sturgeon must, therefore, be prepared to play the waiting game. Not for as long as Boris Johnson wishes, but long enough for his position to become untenable. That might be sooner rather than later — nothing will drive up support for a second referendum like the prime minister refusing to grant one. The longer he holds out, the greater the demand will grow.

Whether the nationalists can actually win IndyRef2, that's a different question. Take Brexit. Britain's 'Leave' vote of 2016 turbocharged the independence cause — most people in Scotland, a nation of pro-Europeans, were aghast at being dragged from the EU by their English cousins — but it also presents challenges. If Scotland rejoins the bloc post-independence, as Sturgeon plans, would it have to take on the unpopular Euro currency? Probably. What of the Anglo-Scottish border? Would goods and people be able to pass unfettered to-and-from an EU and non-EU state? Judging by the situation in Ireland, probably not.

And then there's the pandemic. Sturgeon has been a steadying figure amid the calamity of COVID-19, winning the trust of the Scottish people. But coronavirus has also shown the British state's formidable financial clout, safeguarding jobs in Scotland with great tranches of monetary support. The UK's vaccine programme is a glittering success, too — a result of a world-beating scientific sector.

Scotland, like all nations, must also consider its post-pandemic recovery. The virus's long term economic ramifications aren't yet fully understood, and the country's already shouldering a sizable budget deficit. Then again, the question of independence often exists outside the parameters of practical concerns. It is, for the true believers, a matter of identity. About being ruled from *here*, not *there*. Towards that dream of inviolable sovereignty, they feel they've taken a step closer. Perhaps. But there's a long old road ahead.

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### **Cummings has betrayed his comrades**

*Contempt was the hallmark of the extraordinary performance by Dominic Cummings, the former aide to the Prime Minister, at last week's select committee hearing.*

Leo McKinstry, *The Daily Express*, May 30, 2021

During his seven-hour tirade, he repeatedly denounced Britain's current system of governance. As he poured out his bile to MPs, he declared that Boris Johnson is "unfit" for office, that officialdom is "led by donkeys", that our version of Parliamentary rule is "crackers" and that, at the start of the pandemic, Downing Street was gripped by "chaos". Yet this diatribe was laced with hypocrisy. If the Government was in a mess last year, some of the blame must lie with Cummings, who as the PM's chief adviser had a huge influence on policy.

The dysfunctionality he condemned was partly of his creation, especially given his reputation for causing friction wherever he has worked. "A career psychopath," David Cameron once called him. But even more repugnant was Cummings's proposed solution to the shambles he had outlined.

What Britain needed in the emergency, he said, was "a dictator", someone of "kingly authority" who could "push the boundaries of legality". It was an incendiary comment that displayed his Utopian obsession with building the perfect state machine, where plans are always implemented properly and outcomes always achieved.

The idea of the strong ruler, with power untrammelled by democratic accountability or the failings of others, has long appealed to political mavericks like Cummings. But down that path lies, not efficiency, but tyranny. Despotism has always led to oppression, epitomised by Robespierre's bloodsoaked Terror in the French Revolution or the genocidal regime of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany.

Across the Soviet bloc, the triumph of Communism brought neither effectiveness nor prosperity, but only the nightmare of one-party totalitarianism, upheld by labour camps, relentless propaganda and secret police. "Imagine a boot stamping on a human face forever," wrote George Orwell in his novel 1984.

In Britain, thanks to our traditions of liberty stretching back to Magna Carta, we have never had true despotism.

The nearest we came was the bleak Puritan ascendancy of Oliver Cromwell in the mid-17th century but even that was followed by the move towards Parliamentary rule under a constitutional monarchy.

With his yearning for unencumbered, decisive leadership, Cummings might despise this system but, for all its flaws, it has worked well in Britain, cementing freedom, progress and stability. Nor did Parliamentary democracy prevent us achieving heroic victories in both World Wars under Lloyd George and Churchill, without any recourse to dictatorship.

Throughout his five years as wartime Prime Minister Churchill was punctilious about respecting the rights of the House of Commons. His Deputy Leader in the coalition, Clement Attlee, thought that Churchill's greatest achievement was to reconcile the demands of the military with the needs of democracy.

Yet we don't need to delve into history to see the horrors of dictatorship. Even after the fall of the Berlin Wall more than three decades ago, they can still be found in Europe. At the moment Cummings was peddling his strongman vision, in Belarus, the vicious regime of ex- Communist apparatchik Alexander Lukashenko was providing another chilling insight into the realities of iron rule.

The Belarusian Government had used the fake pretext of a bomb plot to divert a Ryanair flight to its own capital of Minsk. There the secret police arrested Roman Protasevich, a blogger and arch critic of Lukashenko. Protasevich now faces 15 years in prison for his "thought crimes". This incident is typical of Lukashenko - in power since 1994 when he won his first presidential election. He is only able to stay there through the support of a massive police force and ballot rigging. His fraudulent victory in last summer's election led to huge protests, met with police brutality - in keeping with Lukashenko's notorious boast about the best way to deal with dissidents: "We will ring their necks, as one might a duck." Lukashenko is proof dictatorship is the enemy of humanity.

It is also ironic that Cummings should make his call in the week new evidence suggests coronavirus might have been created in China's Wuhan laboratory, perhaps through research into biological warfare. So the dictatorship of the Chinese Communist Party may be responsible for the greatest health catastrophe of modern times.

Due to Covid, there has been an unprecedented erosion of civil liberties by governments throughout the world.

Once the disease is conquered, we need a full return to freedom, not any slide towards permanent authoritarianism.

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## 5 **Brexit turns into disaster for the Hull-based fishing industry**

*The sea of opportunity that Brexit was supposed to deliver has certainly dried up for Yorkshire's fishermen. News that the UK and Norway have failed to reach a fishing deal for this year means boats like the Hull-based Kirkella remain tied up, possibly for good.*

Jane Thomas, *Yorkshire Bylines*, 1 May 2021

0 The Kirkella is a state-of-the-art trawler with a crew of 30 that catches 8–10 percent of all the fish sold in the UK's fish and chip shops. It's part of a fishing industry that goes back generations in Hull and accounts for over 100 jobs, plus many more in the supply chain.

5 The owners of the vessel, UK Fisheries, have spent the last two years campaigning to save the UK's distant-waters fishing industry. They have invested approximately £180m in the last 20 years in the Humberside fishing industry, and had planned to put in a further £100m. Their scorecard shows just how slow the government has been to make progress with securing any trading arrangements with any of the traditional partners around the North Atlantic – The Faroes, Greenland, Iceland and now Norway.

0 It's not just the lack of a deal, it's the apparent lack of attention that the government is paying to this all-important fishing industry. All that UK Fisheries is asking is that the government negotiate continued low-tariff access to UK markets for Norwegian exporters contingent on Britain receiving the Arctic cod quotas.

5 Without a deal, British boats can no longer fish in Norway's sub-Arctic waters. "In consequence, there will be no British-caught Arctic cod sold through chippies for our national dish – it will all be imported from the Norwegians, who will continue to sell their fish products to the UK tariff-free while we are excluded from these waters", UK Fisheries chief executive Jane Sandell told the *Yorkshire Post*. She went on to say they had been promised a "sea of opportunity, not the scuppering of an entire industry". The anger from the owners of the Kirkella is palpable, leading Sandell to tell the BBC the lack of fishing deal is "a disgrace and a national embarrassment".

0 As a press release from UK Fisheries recently asked, what is the point in setting up freeport on Humberside if your first action is to eliminate £120m of existing investment and future opportunities for the fishing fleet? "We have had years to prepare for its discussions with the Norwegians. It should have been, to paraphrase the former Trade Secretary Liam Fox, 'the easiest deal in history'. But the UK's approach to all of its post-Brexit fishing negotiations seems to have been characterised by error and neglect".

5 It's not just Hull that's suffering; boats are now lying idle around the UK. Plymouth City Council's leader claims the city's fishing industry has been "betrayed" by the Brexit deal. *Business Live* reported that fishermen are unhappy with the post-Brexit deal, as it hasn't allowed them to catch more fish as originally expected, and in the meantime EU boats are still fishing in UK waters.

The failure at ministerial level to handle negotiations with any success is indeed fishy. A solicitor representing 20 shellfish firms told the *Guardian* the government had shown "negligence and maladministration". [...]

0 The BBC now reports that a DEFRA spokesperson has told them the UK has always been clear it would only strike agreements "if they are balanced and in the interests of the UK fishing industry". They added, "We put forward a fair offer on access to UK waters and the exchange of fishing quotas, but we have concluded that our positions remain too far apart to reach an agreement this year".

5 Many fishermen voted for Brexit on the promise of a better future, but for the crew of the Kirkella, that future now looks very bleak. Jacob Rees-Mogg can josh all he likes about getting our fish back, but it's no laughing matter if your family income depends on fishing and if your local economy relies on the ability to have a viable industry.

Anyone who pays any attention to details knows that Britain exports much of what it catches and imports much of the fish we actually eat (the cod and the haddock down the local chippy). That's what our industry is based on. So we may get our fish back, but we won't eat them.

0 Karl Turner MP for Hull East told the *Yorkshire Post* that, "Brexit was supposed to be the fishing industry's salvation, yet Hull is having hundreds of jobs and millions in investment left high and dry".

5 And that's the reality for the fishing industry. Used shamelessly in the propaganda war that was Brexit, to paint some nostalgic picture of reclaiming our waters and our fishes. Getting back our sovereignty and our 'plaice' in the sun. But the fishing industry has been used shamelessly, and is now largely ignored now Brexit is done. For places like Hull, that is unforgivable.

**NASA Rover Attempting Most Difficult Martian Touchdown Yet. NASA's latest road trip to Mars is almost complete,** Associated Press, *US World and News Report*, February 17, 2021

5 CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)—Spacecraft aiming to land on Mars have skipped past the planet, burned up on entry, smashed into the surface, and made it down amid a fierce dust storm only to spit out a single fuzzy gray picture before dying.

10 Almost 50 years after the first casualty at Mars, NASA is attempting its hardest Martian touchdown yet. The rover named Perseverance is headed Thursday for a compact 5-mile-by-4-mile (8-kilometer-by-6.4-kilometer) patch on the edge of an ancient river delta. It's filled with cliffs, pits, sand dunes and fields of rocks, any of which could doom the \$3 billion mission. The once submerged terrain also could hold evidence of past life, all the more reason to gather samples at this spot for return to Earth 10 years from now. While NASA has done everything possible to ensure success, "there's always this fear that it won't work well, it won't go well," Erisa Stilley, a landing team engineer, said Tuesday. "We've had a pretty good run of successful missions recently and you never want to be the next one that isn't. It's heart-breaking when it happens."

A look at NASA's latest mission:

20 MARS MASTER: NASA has nailed eight of nine landing attempts, making the U.S. the only country to achieve a successful touchdown. China hopes to become the second nation in late spring with its own life-seeking rover; its vessel entered orbit around Mars last week along with a United Arab Emirates spacecraft. The red planet's extremely thin atmosphere makes it hard to get down safely. Russia has piled up the most lander losses at Mars and moon Phobos, beginning in the early 1970s. The European Space Agency also has tried and failed. Two NASA landers are still humming along: 2012's Curiosity rover and 2018's InSight. Launched last July, Perseverance will set down some 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) away at Jezero Crater, descending by parachute, rocket engines and sky crane. The millions of lines of software code and hundreds of thousands of electric parts have to work with precision. "There's no go-backs. There's no retries," deputy project manager Matt Wallace said Wednesday.

30 TOUGHEST LANDING YET: NASA has equipped the 1-ton Perseverance—a beefier version of Curiosity — with the latest landing tech to ace this touchdown. A new autopilot tool will calculate the descending rover's distance to the targeted location and release the massive parachute at the precise moment. Then another system will scan the surface, comparing observations with on-board maps. The rover could detour up to 2,000 feet (600 meters) while seeking somewhere safe, Neil Armstrong style. Without these gizmos, Jezero Crater would be too risky to attempt. Once down, the six-wheeled Perseverance should be the best driver Mars has ever seen, with more autonomy and range than Curiosity. "Percy's got a new set of kicks," explained chief engineer Adam Steltzner, "and she is ready for trouble on this Martian surface with her new wheels."

40 LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF LIFE: Where there was water, there may have been life. That's why NASA wants Perseverance snooping around Jezero Crater, once home to a lake fed by a river. It's now bone dry, but 3.5 billion years ago, this Martian lake was as big and wet as Nevada and California's Lake Tahoe. Perseverance will shoot lasers at rocks judged most likely to contain evidence of past microscopic life, analyzing the emitted vapor, and drill into the best candidates. A few dozen core samples—about a pound's worth (one-half kilogram) of rock and dust — will be set aside in sealed titanium tubes for future pickup.

50 ROUND-TRIP TICKET: Scientists have wanted to get hold of Mars rocks ever since NASA's Mariners provided the first close pictures a half-century ago. NASA is teaming up with the European Space Agency to do just that. The bold plan calls for a rover and return rocket to launch to Mars in 2026, to retrieve Perseverance's stash of samples. NASA expects to bring back the rocks as early as 2031, several years before the first astronauts might arrive on the scene. The rover's super sterilized sample tubes are the cleanest components ever sent into space, according to NASA, to avoid any contaminating traces of Earth.

**The U.S. Capitol Riots and the Double Standard of Protest Policing**, Joseph P. Williams, *US World and News Report*, January 12, 2021

5 Last year, on a sunny June afternoon in Washington, D.C., a phalanx of police officers in riot gear  
lobbed stun grenades into demonstrators gathered near the White House to condemn police use of deadly  
force against African Americans. Behind a cloud of pepper spray, the officers used batons and shields  
to manhandle the crowd in Lafayette Square, making way for President Donald Trump to walk through  
for a photo op at a nearby church. The demonstrators, most of them Black, had chanted slogans  
10 denouncing police brutality or carried signs with the names of Black people who died at the hands of  
law enforcement. Last week, under gray January skies, a frenzied mob – overwhelmingly white, many  
wearing red Make America Great Again caps, at least one man toting a Confederate battle flag –  
trampled uniformed police officers, breached flimsy barriers and stormed into the U.S. Capitol building  
during an ongoing session of Congress. In Washington to show support for the president and violently  
15 disrupt certification of the 2020 presidential election, some were clad in tactical gear, carrying guns and  
toting bundles of plastic zip-tie handcuffs. Egged on by Trump himself, they swarmed inside, smashing  
windows and looting congressional offices. Some rioters shouted about lynching powerful lawmakers,  
including Vice President Mike Pence and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was barricaded inside a  
safe room. When the building was secured hours later, authorities found a gallows and a noose. After  
20 the sacking of arguably the most important building in America last Wednesday, critics including  
President-elect Joe Biden have compared it to the heavy-handed law enforcement used against Black  
Lives Matter demonstrators in Washington. It's yet another example, they argue, of two Americas, this  
one centered on protests and how police handle them. In Black America, critics contend, largely peaceful  
demonstrations are aggressively policed, like the clashes BLM protesters had with police in Washington,  
25 Minneapolis and Portland last year. At one point in Washington, protesters confronted law enforcement  
officers whose identification patches and name plates were stripped from their uniforms. In Portland,  
some BLM demonstrators were arrested on the spot, swept into unmarked vans and whisked to secret  
detention sites. In White America, they say, far-right demonstrators seem to face far less law-  
enforcement muscle, even though some participating groups, like the Proud Boys, have violent  
reputations and others seem to embrace intimidation as part of their protest strategy. Critics point to the  
30 deadly Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, as well as last year's spate of right-wing protests  
opposing coronavirus-related public restrictions. In those largely white demonstrations, protesters  
openly carried firearms, including semi-automatic rifles, and repeatedly tried to barge into state  
legislatures. In Michigan, a far-right group was arrested for a detailed plot to kidnap Gov. Gretchen  
Whitmer, a Democrat. "No one can tell me that if it had been a group of Black Lives Matter protesting  
35 yesterday, they would have been treated very, very differently than the mob of thugs that stormed the  
Capitol," President-Elect Joe Biden said in a video statement Thursday. "We all know that's true. And  
it's unacceptable. Totally unacceptable." Those who focus on the fault lines of race in America agree.  
Rep. Cori Bush, a first-term Missouri Democrat who was a leader in her home state's Black Lives Matter  
movement, told MSNBC that protesters "would have been shot" if they were black like her. "We  
40 wouldn't have made it up those steps," she said. A coalition of civil rights groups, including the NAACP,  
the Urban League and Unidos, issued a joint statement immediately after the riot, calling it "the height  
of white privilege." Many of the "terrorists" that ransacked the Capital, the statement said, were allowed  
"to return home without consequence, despite their violent acts." The Economic Policy Institute, a left-  
leaning think tank, blamed law enforcement for the security collapse, pointing out that some Capitol  
45 Police officers "were seen taking selfies with protesters and letting them through a barricaded area,"  
according to a statement. It was a "stark contrast" with the summer's protests, the statement said, during  
which police "used tear gas and rubber bullets against peaceful Black Lives Matters protestors" fighting  
systemic racism. After an initial investigation, Capitol Police on Monday suspended several officers for  
their actions during the riot. Several more are reportedly under investigation. Capital Police Chief Steven  
50 Sund, who resigned in the aftermath of the riot, has argued his department had a "robust plan" for  
controlling peaceful protesters but didn't anticipate an angry, violent mob. Trump himself had whipped  
the crowd into a frenzy, urging them to "show strength" and "fight" the government. The "mass riots  
were not First Amendment activities; they were criminal riotous behavior," he said in a statement  
Thursday. The event's lightning shift from peaceful rally to violent mob, he said, was "was unlike any I  
55 have ever experienced in my 30 years in law enforcement here in Washington, D.C."



**Proud Boys Threatened to Shut Off D.C. Water System as Part of Overtaking Capitol, Email Says**, Matthew Impelli, *Newsweek*, March 5, 2021.

Members of the far-right group, Proud Boys, threatened to shut off the water system in Washington D.C. during the January 6 Capitol riots, according to emails obtained by the Associated Press. The Associated Press obtained emails, texts and photographs from multiple law enforcement agencies that responded to the Capitol riots through 35 Freedom of Information Act requests. According to the AP, one email from the Homeland Security division of Federal Protective Service said that roughly 300 Proud Boys were at the Capitol on January 6. "The Proud Boys are threatening to shut down the water system in the downtown area, which includes government facilities," the email said, according to the AP.

Another email sent around 20 minutes later, from a protective service officer whose name was redacted wrote, "POTUS is encouraging the protesters to march to capitol grounds and continue protesting there." On January 6, supporters of former President Donald Trump rallied in D.C. to hear him speak before the Congressional session to certify electoral votes. After Trump spoke at the rally, telling his supporters to "fight like hell," many headed to the Capitol in protest of the Congressional session, and eventually breached the building. The riots left five dead, including one police officer, and led to the House voting in favor of impeaching Trump for "incitement of insurrection." Two other police officers took their lives after the riots. Members of the far-right street fighting Proud Boys organization have been charged in relation to the storming of the U.S. Capitol, with prosecutors alleging two members worked together to obstruct law enforcement trying to defend the building as lawmakers certified the results of the November election. The Department of Justice said two Proud Boy members have been indicted in Washington, D.C. "for conspiring to obstruct law enforcement, among other charges."

Dominic Pezzola, 43, of Rochester, New York, and William Pepe, 31, of Beacon, New York, were named as the two Proud Boys members. They were charged in January with conspiracy; civil disorder; unlawfully entering restricted buildings or grounds; and disorderly and disruptive conduct in restricted buildings or grounds. Pezzola was also indicted for obstruction of an official proceeding, robbery of personal property of the United States, assaulting, resisting, or impeding certain officers, destruction of government property, among other charges. Charging documents describe the Proud Boys group as a "pro-Western fraternal organization for men who refuse to apologize for creating the modern world; aka Western Chauvinists." Proud Boys, often identifiable by their yellow and black clothes, have been involved in many violent incidents in several major cities in recent years, including armed assaults.

Proud Boys have been involved in many confrontations with anti-fascist activists, colloquially known as Antifa. Proud Boys were staunch supporters of Trump, and advocate for authoritarianism to suppress liberalism and socialism. The group shot to national prominence during the presidential election campaign, when Trump refused to denounce them. The former president told the group to "stand back and stand by" when asked to condemn white supremacist groups operating in his name. Federal agencies not responding were also preparing for potential violence. On Jan. 4, U.S. Customs and Border Protection said staff should try to telework for the week. Members of Congress, who were locked down or rushed to safety that day as the attackers approached the House and Senate chambers, are holding hearings this week to get to the bottom of what went wrong with the law enforcement response that allowed the crowd to enter and ransack the Capitol building. One question they are looking to answer is why the Capitol Police didn't have more help on hand early in the day, before the rally near the White House devolved into insurrection at the Capitol. The emails obtained by AP—hastily written and including misspellings and incomplete sentences—show that nearby police agencies were alerted two days earlier that there might be trouble and were prepared to help. The night before the breach, after hours of rallies and speeches across the city, Federal Protective Service officers, who protect federal property, had noticed protesters trying to camp out on federal property and were "being vigilant for any suspicious activity," according to an email from the agency. They were expecting large crowds, and by the next morning they were monitoring them closely.

Intelligence agents used Facebook to monitor dozens of protests planned for Jan. 6 and beyond, according to emails. These rallies had names such as the "Yugest Trump Parade of All (45 Exclamation Points)!", "Fight for President Trump and Your Rights," and "Wild Protest for Donald Trump (The Republican Mandate)." Some events were permitted, others were not.