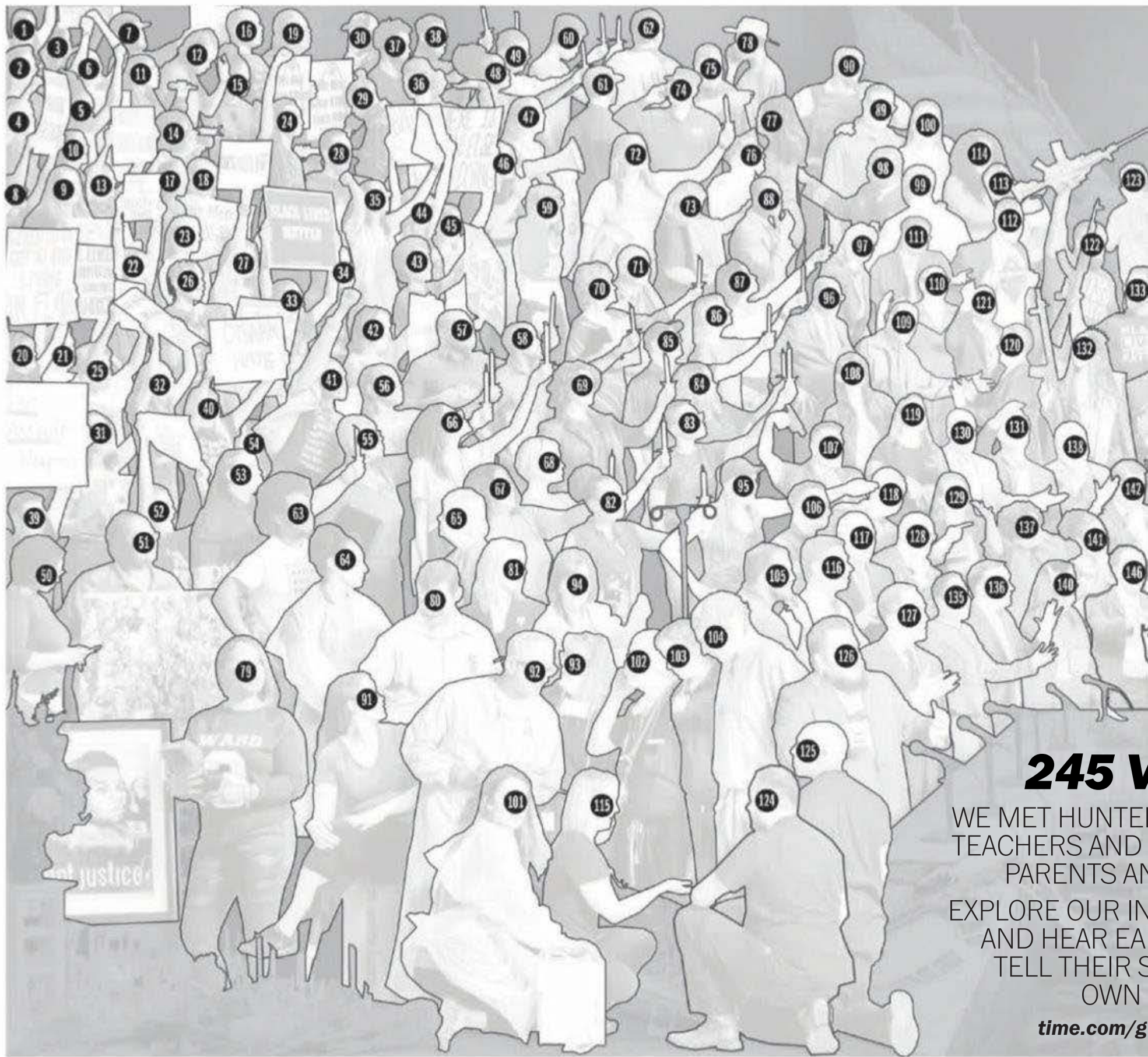


GUNS IN AMERICA

A TIME and JR Project



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time.com/g

THE PARTICIPANTS

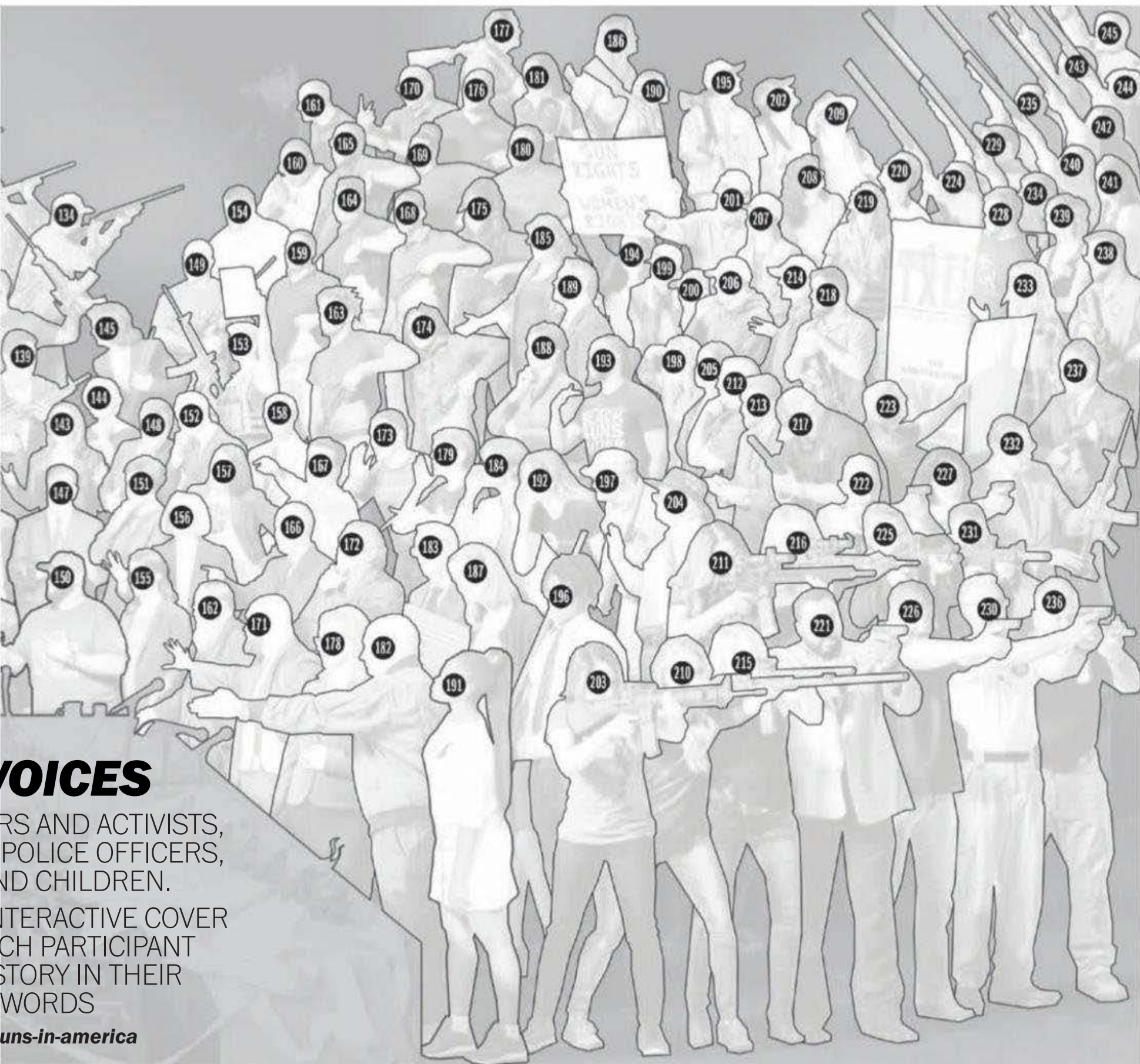
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AND
WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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From the Editor

The art of TIME

IN HIS 2015 BOOK, THE ARTIST JR ASKS, “CAN Art Change the World?” Artists see beyond walls, across divides, around corners. Through their eyes, we understand the world in new, clearer ways—which is why TIME since its founding has worked with great artists to create our covers, from Andy Warhol to Andrew Wyeth, Robert Rauschenberg to Ai Weiwei, Christo and Jeanne-Claude to Shepard Fairey. Fifty years ago, Roy Lichtenstein marked a series of heartbreaking assassinations with a TIME cover, “The Gun in America,” which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

So how would an artist, one whose body of work explores the world’s most complex social issues, approach the topic of guns in America today? If he were JR, a native of Paris, it would be with fresh eyes (behind his trademark sunglasses) and an open mind. His latest work—extraordinary murals that bring together on one canvas people from all points of view and walks of life—is about our common humanity. His message, powerful and regrettably rare at this cultural moment, landed him on this year’s TIME 100 list of the world’s most influential people. As social entrepreneur Laurene Powell Jobs put it in a tribute in that issue, JR “has dedicated his career to bridging gaps—physical, cultural, spiritual—among people of all backgrounds.”

Last May, when JR and I first discussed his creating a cover for TIME, we immediately landed on guns. It was just a few months after the school shooting in Parkland, Fla., which had prompted a painful and often vicious national debate over what is certainly a shared goal: preventing the senseless mass murder of children.

What drew JR to the subject was that he knew little about it. “In France,” he says, “we don’t have any relationship with guns, and so I’m discovering the whole issue.” What drew me to this collaboration was the hope that his creativity and outsider’s perspective could help those of us in America think differently about this debate, and the many others where rage too often substitutes for discourse. In a week when explosives are being sent to major public figures and news organizations, the urgency could not be more clear.



^
JR and TIME editor Edward Felsenthal in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 4

JR’S MURAL ENVISIONS the cover of TIME as a table, the kind of setting where we might actually listen to one another. Over five months, he and his team, along with a group of TIME journalists, traveled to three cities—St. Louis; Washington, D.C.; and Dallas—to film, photograph and record, one by one, people who represent the vast range of voices in our gun debate.

The final result brought together 245 people from every imaginable vantage point: veterans and teachers, hunters and doctors, people afraid that guns may kill their children and people afraid they won’t have guns to protect their children. They include Lezley McSpadden, whose son Michael Brown was shot dead in Ferguson, Mo., which helped spark the Black Lives Matter movement; members of the trauma team that treated victims of the horrific 2016 sniper attack on Dallas police; House majority whip Steve Scalise, a gun-rights supporter who was critically injured in a shooting at a congressional baseball practice; and former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head at a 2011 constituent event. We are grateful to the participants for their time.

To JR’s table, we also invited six writers to explore the broader theme of bridging our divides. “The moral certainty of my rage



1959
Andrew Wyeth



1965
Marc Chagall



1968
Roy Lichtenstein



1984
Andy Warhol



2002
Robert Rauschenberg



2013
Ai Weiwei

must be met with humility about the limits of my knowledge,” writes National Book Award winner and Iraq veteran Phil Klay. Columnist David French calls us to put “love for the close neighbor” ahead of “loathing for the distant partisan.” Harvard professor and former TIME editor-in-chief Nancy Gibbs urges us all to the polls on Nov. 6, as “an act of common commitment to the common good.” Commentator Margaret Hoover writes about growing up in a family with partisanship in the genes, while Tommy Orange, author of the thunderous novel *There There*, invokes the power of empathy. And the brilliant Tayari Jones offers the essential reminder that civility doesn’t, and shouldn’t, mean meeting in the middle.

In the pages of this issue, and through an interactive audio and video experience at time.com/guns-in-America, you can hear the stories of all of the 245 cover participants. In the coming months, the mural will travel to museums across the country, and you can also apply to host a projection of and discussion around the mural in your community.

My own favorite TIME cover, a copy of which hangs in my home, is Marc Chagall’s from 1965. Though Chagall originally wanted to paint a view of Manhattan from our offices (“très Chagall,” he told the editors), he ultimately decided on a self-portrait. “First a commandeur, then a TIME cover,” the artist, who had recently been named a commander of the French Legion of Honor, said at the time. “You see what happens when you get old.”

JR is still young at 35, and one hopes there is much more of his message to come for a world that increasingly needs it. The participants in this project “will always be part of the same mural even if they don’t share the same ideas,” says the artist. “I really hope they will actually listen to each other, and I hope that people will join this conversation.”



Edward Felsenthal,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF @EFELSENTHAL



TOP: JR, right, reviews a sketch of the mural with art director Camille Pajot during a studio session in the Grand Hyatt Washington in D.C. on Sept. 5



CENTER: TIME’s Abigail Abrams, left, and Melissa Chan, the lead reporters on the project, conducted more than 400 interviews over five months



BOTTOM: TIME editors with JR at his New York studio following a June kickoff meeting; Mia Tramz and Eben Shapiro, far right, led the project for TIME

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▲ *At home in rural Afghanistan on May 31, Mangal, now 8, recovered from his wounds*

Photograph by Andrew Quilty for TIME

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NEW ENGLAND

SOUTHEAST

PACIFIC NORTHWEST

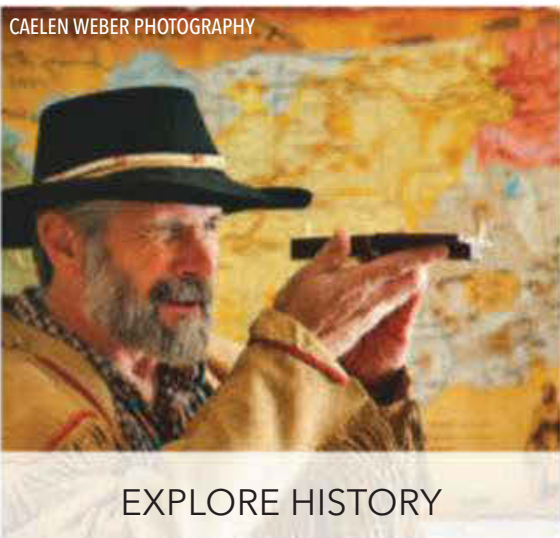
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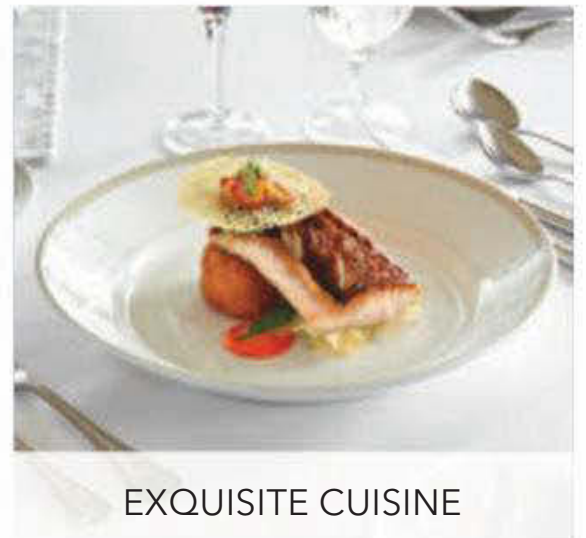
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EXPLORE HISTORY



LARGEST STATEROOMS



EXQUISITE CUISINE

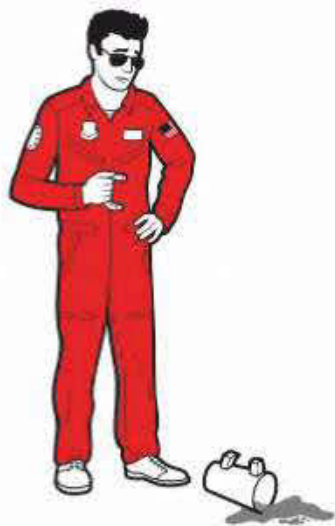


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'YOU KNOW WHAT I AM? I'M A NATIONALIST.'

DONALD TRUMP,
U.S. President, at a campaign rally in Houston on Oct. 22

'I look forward to watching from the sidelines as others continue the hard work ahead.'

SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR,
retired U.S. Supreme Court Justice, in a letter announcing that she has been diagnosed with dementia

'You could write a book about the misery here. Every day, every hour, we have sad stories.'

SHUKRI SHEHADI,
resident of the Rukban camp on the Syria-Jordan border, describing conditions there to the *New York Times*

'I choose love not fear. We exist and always have.'

LAVERNE COX,
trans actor and activist, tweeting her response to the news that the Trump Administration is considering instituting a legal definition of gender that would exclude transgender people

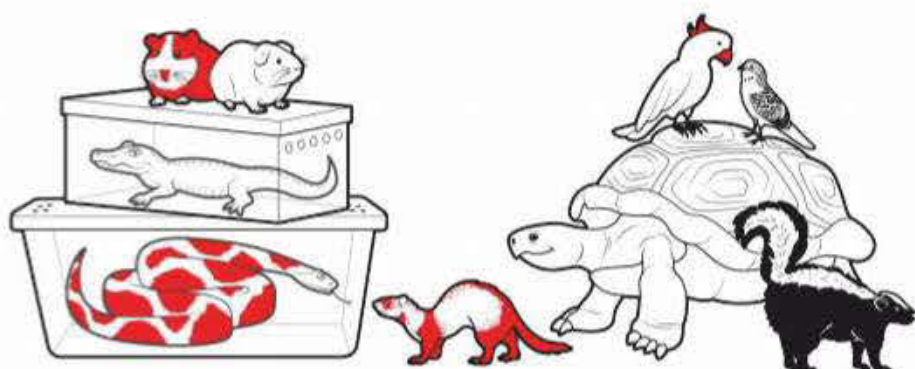
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Age, in years, of the human fossil known as Luzia, the skull of which has been partly recovered from the debris of Brazil's National Museum, after it was feared lost in a catastrophic September fire

'HONESTLY, IT'S NOT FOR EVERYONE.'

NEW SLOGAN FOR THE STATE OF NEBRASKA,
unveiled Oct. 17 by the Nebraska tourism commission

StarKist
Faces fines of up to \$100 million after agreeing to plead guilty to price-fixing canned tuna



245

Number of exotic animals—including snakes, skunks and tortoises—seized from a Pennsylvania home on Oct. 18



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The Brief

BLOWUP
Decades after
the INF treaty
required some
missiles to be
disposed of—like
this one in 1989—
the U.S. wants out



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THE LAST SURVIVING MEMBER
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PHOTOGRAPH BY VLADIMIR VELENGURIN

DIPLOMACY

An arms agreement in the crosshairs

By W.J. Hennigan

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP REMOVED another brick from the crumbling edifice of nuclear-arms control by threatening to withdraw from a treaty with Russia that has kept midrange nuclear-tipped missiles off the European continent for three decades.

Russia, he says, violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty “for many years” by building and fielding prohibited cruise missiles, despite warnings from Washington; Russia denies doing so. So the President sent National Security Adviser John Bolton to Moscow to deliver his decision to “terminate” the agreement to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“It is the American position that Russia is in violation,” Bolton told reporters on Oct. 23 after meeting at the Kremlin. “It is Russia’s position that they are not in violation. So one has to ask, ‘How do you convince the Russians to come back into compliance with obligations they don’t think they’re violating?’”

The INF treaty, first signed by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev in December 1987, was the first and only nuclear-arms-control agreement to eliminate a whole class of nuclear weapons. It forced the countries to scrap more than 2,600 missiles with ranges of 310 to 3,420 miles. Those weapons were considered destabilizing because they could strike targets so quickly that leaders would have little time to run for cover—let alone to strategize about the right response.

In Moscow, Bolton, who has spent his career denouncing international agreements in general, called the treaty antiquated. He said there’s now a new strategic reality, in which concern over such missiles goes beyond the U.S. and Russia. China, he suggested, needs to also be included. (Beijing is not a party to the INF.)

While Bolton was visiting, Putin made an attempt at dark humor, drawing an allusion to the Great Seal of the United States, on which an eagle holds arrows in one claw and an olive branch in the other. “Has your eagle already eaten all the olives,” he asked, “leaving only the arrows?” Bolton smiled. “Hopefully, I will have some answers for you, but I didn’t bring any more olives,” he said.

Bolton didn’t reach straight for the arrows either, though. Under the terms of the agreement, the U.S. must give Russia six months’ notice before full withdrawal.

Bolton confirmed that notice had not yet been given but failed to provide any details on the way ahead. A glimmer of hope came when Putin invited Trump to meet in Paris on Nov. 11 to discuss the arms agreement and other matters of mutual interest as the city celebrates the 100th anniversary of World War I’s end.

THE PRESIDENT’S DECISION to withdraw from the INF nevertheless rattled arms-control experts and former government officials, who saw it as just the latest blow to the nuclear-arms-control regime that has helped preserve peace since the Cold War. In recent years, several treaties initially designed to avoid miscalculation and keep communication channels open between the superpowers have fallen apart.

Since 2014, the State Department has alleged Moscow was in violation of the INF treaty. Yet it has never offered proof. Nothing has been published about the weapon that crossed the line, or its capabilities. The U.S. government

maintains that revealing the information would compromise American spies’ capability to gather intelligence inside Russia. The Obama Administration opted to work behind the scenes to persuade the Kremlin to stand down the program. Underwhelmed by that diplomatic effort, the Trump Administration publicly revealed the name of the missile—the Novator 9M729—in November 2017. Then it began funding development of its own INF-busting missile, which is allowed under the treaty as long as it isn’t actually built.

It was after those tactics apparently failed to deter the Russians that Trump decided to rip up the INF. Arms-control experts worry about the consequences. Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear-weapons analyst with the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif., said the U.S. has nothing to gain by withdrawing and that Moscow will likely only step up the deployment of the 9M729 or similar weapons. “It’s a mistake,” he said. “Russia violated the treaty, but we’re going to take the blame for killing it? Why do Putin a favor?”

The facts about intermediate-range missiles, their speed and fearsomeness, haven’t changed. What has changed is the potential fallout from leaving the INF, which apparently goes beyond Europe. Trump has suggested the INF works only if China agrees to its terms. If that doesn’t happen, Trump threatens a new arms race. The President told reporters on Oct. 22 that his Administration will expand the American nuclear arsenal if Russia and China fail to comply with the INF. As Trump framed it, the U.S. will have no choice but to develop such weapons until its rivals conclude the only way to draw even is with a treaty barring them. “We’ll build it up until they come to their senses,” Trump said. “When they do, then we’ll all be smart, and we’ll all stop.”



‘Has your eagle already eaten all the olives, leaving only the arrows?’

Russian President VLADIMIR PUTIN, left, to U.S. National Security Adviser JOHN BOLTON, right, during a meeting in Moscow on Oct. 23



Some 700,000 people marched in London on Oct. 20 to demand a public vote on the final Brexit deal

THE BULLETIN

More of the same on Brexit, as the clock runs down

ON OCT. 20, ROUGHLY 700,000 PEOPLE marched in London, demanding a referendum on whatever deal Britain's government may finally strike on the terms of its departure from the European Union. It's an idea that has gained traction in recent months, fueled by concerns that Britain's exit will be on worse terms than advertised during the referendum on membership in June 2016. But Prime Minister Theresa May is cool on the notion, and as the March 29, 2019, deadline looms, the matter remains with elected leaders.

HARD PLACE May is in a tough position. Her Conservative Party is bitterly divided over Brexit, with the issue of Northern Ireland's border with the Republic of Ireland a key sticking point. Even if her party were united, May's minority government lacks the numbers to guarantee parliamentary approval of whatever deal she secures with the E.U. That's if she gets one at all: officials are drawing up plans for crashing out of Europe with no deal, which might mean higher tariffs on trade, shortages of food, and more.

CONTINENTAL DRIFT For the centrist E.U. leaders chairing negotiations with Britain, the outlook isn't much better. Blocwide elections set for May 2019 are being fought on a battleground of populist resentment, with far-right and nationalist parties confident they'll take more seats in the E.U.'s legislative body. Europe is currently fighting another battle with anti-E.U. populists in Italy over a budget it says could threaten the euro's stability. Any Brexit agreement that weakens the E.U.'s core pillars of free trade and movement risks empowering its populist critics.

FINAL COUNTDOWN With the clock ticking until Britain's deadline to leave, each side is preparing its final arguments. An emergency summit in November could be the point at which a deal is either reached or rejected. If one is struck, May still has to sell it to Parliament. If not, Britain will prepare for a "no-deal Brexit," potentially dealing a hammer blow to economies on both sides of the Channel—and perhaps sealing May's fate with no obvious successor in place.

—BILLY PERRIGO

NEWS TICKER

Explosives sent to Obama and Clinton

Former U.S. President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton were among several figures associated with the Democratic Party who **received suspicious packages, some containing explosive devices**, on Oct. 24, two days after a bomb was found in philanthropist George Soros' mail.

Train mows down crowd in India

At least 59 people died when **an express train plowed through a crowd of people** watching fireworks at a Hindu festival in Amritsar, in northern India, on Oct. 19. Some local officials said organizers had failed to get permission; authorities announced an inquiry.

Positive sign on opioid epidemic

The U.S. is "beginning to turn the tide" on the opioid crisis, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said on Oct. 23, announcing that data suggest **drug-overdose deaths dropped 2.8% in late 2017 and early 2018**. While officials said the falling numbers are good news, they cautioned that the figures are still preliminary.

NEWS TICKER

Attacks hinder Ebola containment

Authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo say **militia violence is hampering efforts to contain an Ebola outbreak.**

Gunmen in two eastern cities killed 11 civilians and two health workers on Oct. 20. The World Health Organization says the outbreak, which has left some 120 dead, will worsen if medical teams can't step up the response.

Women lag in U.S. promotions

Data from 279 U.S. companies, covering more than 13 million employees, suggests that the American corporate ladder is missing a few key rungs for women.

For every 100 men who are promoted to manager, only 79 women are, says a new report from McKinsey and LeanIn.org.

Oldest intact shipwreck discovered

Archaeologists announced Oct. 23 that they have found what they believe is **the world's oldest intact shipwreck** off the coast of Bulgaria. Low oxygen levels a mile below the surface of the Black Sea have preserved the 2,400-year-old Greek merchant vessel; the 75-ft.-long ship still has its mast and rudders.

GOOD QUESTION

What would happen if the U.S. government really redefined gender?

THE MEANINGS OF TERMS EVOLVE ALL THE time, but the Trump Administration is taking aim at one in particular: gender. The federal government is considering a policy that, by simply stating a meaning for the word sex, could have the effect of ending federal recognition of more than a million adults who identify as genders other than the ones listed on their original birth certificates.

According to a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) memo obtained by the *New York Times*, the Administration is mulling the adoption of a narrow legal definition of sex under Title IX as a set characteristic determined by genitalia at birth. The memo argues that such a key term needs a definition that is “clear, grounded in science, objective and administrable”—but the answer it proposes has already drawn considerable criticism from LGBT-rights activists.

Although it's still unclear how the policy would work, the absence of legal recognition of transgender identities could affect everything from the kind of medical treatment trans patients could access under Medicaid to where trans inmates might be jailed. The proposal also presents a stark contrast to Obama-era guidance that sought to place gender-identity discrimination under the broad protective umbrella of

federal bans on sex discrimination. The stakes are high: last year, more than 20 transgender Americans were killed by violent means.

President Trump responded to the leak by telling reporters on Oct. 22 that his Administration was considering “a lot of different concepts” on the subject of transgender rights and that he was “protecting everybody.”

If implemented, the change would likely draw lawsuits—but a court challenge is trickier than some advocates might hope, explains Deborah Rhode, a law professor at Stanford. “You have to show standing,” she says. “Until the definition is enforced in some way that you're at risk, most courts are not going to want to hear the suit.”

And while activists await a plaintiff, the new definition could become widely used. If it's considered legal by the Department of Justice, the Departments of Education, Justice, Labor and HHS might adopt it. Plus, any case would likely have to work its way up through lower courts before it reached the Supreme Court docket.

In the meantime, the *Times* reports, disputes would have to be resolved with genetic testing. That sounds simple enough, but experts note that gender is understood to be affected by a number of factors other than DNA.

“The short answer is there's not a genetic test that can reliably predict a person's gender,” says Dr. Amy Weimer, the founder of UCLA's Gender Health Program. If this comes to fruition, she says, “The word I would use is *catastrophic*.” —ABBY VESOULIS

ART

Imitation game

The Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., revealed Oct. 22 that tests showed at least five of its supposed Dead Sea Scroll fragments are fake. Here, more artificial artifacts. —Ciara Nugent

MAYAN MIMIC

Mexican officials believe a Mayan statue that sold for \$4.2 million in Paris in 2011 was not authentic. The 5-ft.-4-in. warrior didn't match the style of the period it was said to be from—over 1,000 years ago.

DUMMY DIAMONDS

The Czech National Museum said in March that many of the jewels in its collection, including a 5-carat diamond and a 19-carat sapphire, were fakes. Curators said they may have been the victim of a con or a heist.



COUNTERFEIT COLLECTION

In April, a French museum dedicated to painter Étienne Terrus learned that more than half its works were forgeries. One showed a tower built in the 1950s, some 30 years after the local painter died.

Milestones

WON

A jackpot worth \$1.537 billion, by a Mega Millions ticket holder in South Carolina on Oct. 23.

WOUNDED

U.S. Army Brig. General Jeffrey Smiley and Zalmi Wesa, the governor of Kandahar province, Afghanistan, in an attack at the governor's compound on Oct. 18. Two Afghan officials were killed in the attack.

FREED

Japanese journalist Jumpei Yasuda, more than three years after he was captured by militants in northern Syria while reporting on the civil war, Tokyo confirmed Oct. 24.

AWARDED

Damages of \$78.5 million to a **groundskeeper who sued Monsanto**, arguing that its Roundup weed killer gave him cancer. A Californian judge rejected Monsanto's appeal but slashed the \$289 million it was originally ordered to pay.

GRANTED

A building permit for the Sagrada Familia, Antoni Gaudi's legendary Barcelona church, as part of an Oct. 18 deal, after 136 years of unlicensed construction work. Church trustees will pay \$41 million to city authorities.

OPENED

The **world's longest sea bridge**, which connects Hong Kong to Macau and mainland China, on Oct. 23. The bridge spans 34 miles and cost about \$20 billion.



Ronneberg was initially reluctant to tell his story but began raising awareness of the dangers of war in the 1970s

DIED

Joachim Ronneberg Resistance fighter

IT WAS A WINTER NIGHT IN 1943, AND A 23-YEAR-OLD NORWEGIAN fighter was gazing at his target: a hydroelectric power plant in southern Norway where Nazi scientists were trying to develop "heavy water." Joachim Ronneberg knew the project was vital to Hitler's war effort, but he learned only later that his actions that night likely thwarted the Nazis from developing an atomic bomb.

Ronneberg—who died Oct. 21 at the age of 99—led eight comrades on a secret mission coordinated from Britain. They skied across a pine forest and crossed a mountain river before sneaking into the heavily guarded plant. They planted explosive charges inside the cylinder room, sending Nazi research for a nuclear weapon literally down the drain. The men then escaped into neighboring Sweden, skiing 200 miles across southern Norway with 3,000 German soldiers in pursuit.

Ronneberg was the last surviving member of that team of saboteurs. He had been awarded high honors by Norway, Britain and the U.S., and his exploits were immortalized in the 1965 film *The Heroes of Telemark*. He lamented the historical inaccuracies in that film and devoted his later years to telling his story to younger generations. "There is a lot of talk about 'never again,'" he told the *New York Times* in 2015. "But this is impossible if we don't remember what happened back then." —BILLY PERRIGO

HONORED

Julia Louis-Dreyfus Queen of comedy

JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS HAS always wrung laughs out of the tiniest tics: a conspiratorial wink, a repulsed grimace, an incredulous stare. The mere mental image of the convulsive dancing of her excitable *Seinfeld* character, Elaine Benes, can be enough to send a fan into hysterics. In her current role, as the vain politician Selina Meyer on HBO's *Veep*, the 57-year-old actor dispenses withering insults with a camera-ready grin.

These performances have made Louis-Dreyfus the Meryl Streep of TV comedy. Over the course of a career that began on *Saturday Night Live* in 1982, she has won eight acting Emmys—a feat matched only by the great Cloris Leachman. On Oct. 21, she added comedy's most prestigious trophy, the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, to her collection.

During a ceremony at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., Louis-Dreyfus cracked jokes on topics ranging from Brett Kavanaugh to her recent recovery from breast cancer. "Cancer isn't at all funny," she said. "But a big part of dealing with it has been finding the funny parts." —JUDY BERMAN



Jamie Lee Curtis

proves she's more than a horror-movie legend—no retouching necessary

By Sam Lansky

PULLING INTO THE DRIVEWAY OF JAMIE LEE Curtis' house on the west side of Los Angeles, I am met by her dog Runi, a rescue terrier-poodle that bounds down the stairs like an animated ball of fluff, tail wagging. Curtis is not far behind, striding down to meet me warmly as if we are already old friends. She's tall and trim, and her gaze is intense—in a good way. Upstairs in her kitchen, she fixes a cappuccino and pours me a tall glass of mint water and we start talking. She brings up her new film *Halloween*, a new imagining of the granddaddy of the contemporary horror movie, and the book she's reading about World War I, as well as trauma and healing and the state of America, and soon we're both getting emotional, and over an hour has passed before I even think to turn my tape recorder on. Everything she says is absolutely sincere—about herself, the world we're living in and her very long career.

It's a career that spans four decades of roles in television and film. The original *Halloween* was the one that made her a star back in 1978. Her performance as Laurie Strode, a teenage babysitter being hunted by the killer Michael Myers, and the string of horror films in which she subsequently starred earned her the title *Scream Queen*, though she's also been in a lot of other kinds of movies: the Oscar-nominated heist comedy *A Fish Called Wanda* and James Cameron's action thriller *True Lies*, in which she delivered a now iconic striptease, and Disney's 2003 remake of *Freaky Friday*, in which she body-swapped with Lindsay Lohan. Along the way she did many other things too: she wrote 13 children's books, became an accomplished photographer, got sober and talked openly about it, invented a diaper with a built-in pocket for wipes (seriously) and started a family, marrying the beloved writer-director Christopher Guest (*Waiting for Guffman*), with whom she has two children. All of this helped make her an icon, at once outspoken and relatable.

But *Halloween* is what started it all, which makes this new telling of the story a full-circle moment for Curtis. It might have seemed risky to exhume what was, to some, a tired franchise. But Jake Gyllenhaal, Curtis' godson, encouraged her to do it; he raved to her about the director David Gordon Green, whom he'd worked with on the

CURTIS QUICK FACTS

Getting real
In 2002, at age 43, Curtis sparked a conversation about beauty standards in media by posing for *More* magazine with no makeup or retouching.

Political animal
Curtis campaigned for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election at, she says, "farmhouses in Iowa."

Picture this
Long before Instagram, Curtis started a blog called *iPhoneys* for iPhone photographers to share their images.

movie *Stronger*. Green sent Curtis the script for this new *Halloween*. "I understood right away what he was trying to do," she says. "This didn't begin as a franchise—that word didn't exist! It was a little horror movie about babysitters." Green's vision was to wipe the slate clean, as if the many other sequels and spin-offs from the *Halloween* story, both those that featured Curtis and those that didn't, never happened. "In this universe, something f-cked up happened 40 years ago," Curtis says, "and 40 years later, we're going to see what happened to that girl." Now Strode is older and wiser, though her daughter Karen (Judy Greer) thinks Laurie is paranoid and hysterical to still be convinced that the man who terrorized her as a teenager will someday come after her again. Even Laurie's granddaughter Allyson (Andi Matichak) is a little wary of her. But when a bus carrying the since-incarcerated Myers crashes and he escapes—on Halloween night, of course, exactly four decades since the events of the first film—her worst fears are confirmed.

For Curtis, who's not a fan of horror movies as a genre—"I don't like them at all!" she says—this new *Halloween* represented a way to tell a story about trauma, especially the many kinds that women endure. "The movements of #MeToo and #TimesUp, all of it, is a result of generational, systematic abuse of women, and the trauma that abuse generates in a person," she says. Yes, it's a slasher flick, and one in which teens—as well as adults—get gutted by a masked, knife-wielding psychopath. But it's also a film that's curious about how people cope, even many years after being traumatized, and about the nebulous boundary between anxiety and paranoia when you have a very good reason to be afraid. When Laurie booby-traps her house in anticipation of an attack, she's not crazy: she's just steeling herself for the inevitability that a bad guy will come back for her.

IT HELPS THAT, unlike many horror movies—including several in the *Halloween* franchise—this new one manages to be cheeky, smart and genuinely scary. The script is laugh-out-loud funny. Yet there was also space for Curtis to play with this character who's since become the archetype for the "final girl"—the horror-movie heroine who finds a way to survive. During filming, Green called her one morning to tell her he was constructing a shot where Laurie sees on the news that Myers has escaped, and asked Curtis what he thought Laurie would be doing in that moment. "And I went like this," Curtis says, and she snaps her fingers. "She's making Nesquik strawberry milk. Because she's still frozen at 17, when she used to make strawberry milk in the morning." This attention to detail, this consideration for what life would be like



for a character who's survived something so terrible, is what gets her excited. "I came back from this movie remembering—this can be super fun and creative and collaborative!" It energized her so much that she came home and wrote a screenplay, for an eco-horror movie that she plans to direct. "It kicked me into a creative space," she says.

Creative spaces are familiar for Curtis, who grew up in Hollywood, the daughter of legendary actors Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh. But she's as voluble when discussing her other interests as she is talking about her movies. The subject of her recovery from an addiction to painkillers, which she calls "the single greatest thing I'll ever do in my life," leads to a conversation about the opioid epidemic in America, and we talk for a long time about her latest children's book, *Me, Myselfie & I: A Cautionary Tale*, about a mom who becomes obsessed with documenting her family's life. "I'm terrified by social media—the obsession with our curated lives," she says. "I don't proselytize, because I cop to it too! How quickly you can hit the little booster button that brightens you up. The idea that

'A selfie is by nature self-loving, but it's become self-loathing.'

JAMIE LEE CURTIS, on our selfie-obsessed culture

we can no longer look at our unvarnished selves at all. A selfie is by nature self-loving, but it's become self-loathing." I leave her house with no fewer than four books that she wants me to read, including that World War I book, Wade Davis' *Into the Silence*. (She bought multiple copies to give away to friends, as she does with many books she loves.)

A few weeks later, *Halloween* opens to glowing reviews and a monster take at the box office, earning over \$77.5 million. It marks several milestones, including the biggest horror-movie opening with a female lead and the highest-grossing film opening with a female lead over 55. When Curtis posts on Twitter about these record-breaking stats, her tweet goes viral. She writes me from Australia, where she's doing press for the movie. "It is a story with a happy ending," she says. "In my industry this doesn't happen very often, if ever, and that I am getting this opportunity as I am kissing 60 is beyond my wildest dreams. I'm the luckiest girl in the world." And she sends me a selfie with the Sydney Opera House in the background. It doesn't look overly filtered, but she's still glowing. □



LightBox

Seeking shelter

A Honduran woman shields her child in Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico, on Oct. 19, after their fellow migrants stormed a border checkpoint there in order to cross over from Guatemala. They are just two of the 7,000-plus people—mostly nationals of the Northern Triangle countries of El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras—who have joined a caravan of migrants that reached Mexico in mid-October. Some are expected to request asylum there, but many are determined to keep heading north to the next border, with hopes of making it into the U.S.

Photograph by Ueslei Marcelino—Reuters

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The View

SOCIETY

POLITICIANS, IN YOUR POCKET

By Katy Steinmetz

Eleni Kounalakis, a Democrat running for lieutenant governor in California, is sitting on a couch in San Francisco, introducing herself to about one voter per second. Stylus in hand, she's hosting a "text bank" and using an app called Hustle to rapid-fire her platform—along with appeals for support—straight to voters' cell phones. ▶

INSIDE

FIXING
NATIONALISM'S
BAD REPUTATION

WHY COMPANIES WILL KEEP
DOING BUSINESS WITH
SAUDI ARABIA

HOW TO
HELP DEMENTIA
CAREGIVERS

The View Opener

“You get my vote just for reaching out,” one texts back. “Yes it’s time for more women in power!” writes another. A third is less receptive: “Piss off you corporatist Clintonite establishment neoliberal bootlicker.” Kounalakis shrugs. “Opt out,” she says, tapping a button that takes the person off her list.

This is a scene playing out across America this election season, as text messages become a new favorite form of outreach for campaigns. In an era when the majority of U.S. households no longer have a landline, millions of people have cut the cord on cable TV and direct mailers are quickly recycled, texts can “cut through the clutter,” as one politico explains. Some voters prefer it to a phone call. Others feel it’s an intrusion into one of the few sacred, ad-free spaces they have left. Campaigns are used to getting some texts back that are NSFW.

Like it or not, this is the future, as businesses and nonprofits start embracing texts too. “I don’t want to say it’s inevitable,” says Daniel Souweine, CEO of a text-focused startup called Relay, “but text messaging is how people communicate.” Hustle, for one, worked with about 100 campaigns in 2016. This year the number “will be in the thousands” by Nov. 6, says CEO Roddy Lindsay. By 2020, other insiders predict, it may be one of the main ways campaigns reach out to voters.

The databases are already being built. Among Hustle’s clients are most Democratic state parties. As is the Democratic National Committee, which earlier this year purchased the cell-phone numbers of 94 million registered voters. “Campaigns are going to use whatever tools they have to reach people,” says Souweine, whose company is one of many that help clients send thousands of texts per hour without running afoul of antispam laws.

THE APPEAL of the political text is multifold. Campaigns can start a conversation with voters without interrupting dinner, they say. Sending a “cold text” is less awkward for volunteers. And while many doors don’t get answered, texts are a fast, low-effort way to deliver a message to voters in far-flung places.

But the main reason strategists



Volunteers and California state senator Robert Hertzberg, right, participate in a text bank for Eleni Kounalakis on Oct. 20

think texts are so effective is the same reason many voters are upset to be receiving them: while we’ve come to accept a barrage of noise in our email inboxes and social-media feeds, the text message has largely remained a medium for personal, invited communication. That’s why an estimated 90% are read within three minutes of being received, according to marketing firm MobileSquared. “With a text message, you know you’re firing it right into somebody’s pocket,” says David Grant, a 24-year-old libertarian in Maine who has gotten several unsolicited political texts this year. “I will fight to the end of the earth,” he says, “to make sure my text messages don’t become my email.”

Some people will be annoyed at any form of political advertising, though. “People would rather be communicated to in a text channel than bombarded other places,” says Gerrit Lansing, co-founder of Opn Sesame, a firm helping many Republicans with their texting campaigns this year. His platform uses a list of 17 phrases that automatically opt people out when they respond negatively. “You can’t really talk to the TV and tell [the ads] to turn off,” Lansing says.

Venture-capital firms have poured tens of millions into platforms like

Hustle. While that’s a strong vote of confidence, insiders also acknowledge that consumer outcry or a change in how the FCC interprets the law—which currently lets tech platforms do most of the work besides pressing “send”—could upend the golden era of political texting just as it’s getting started.

Since 2016, Debra Cleaver, founder of the nonpartisan Vote.org, has relied on texts to prod young people to register, remind voters where their polling places are and fight voter suppression by countering inaccurate information on the fly. But she says she’s seen the volume of political texts go up this year and the quality go down. While some organizations carefully target their texts to people who might be interested, others use a firehose approach. As she’s in the midst of expressing these concerns, her phone buzzes. It’s a text that says it’s from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, asking for money for unnamed “conservative candidates.”

“As an organization that has actively pursued this,” Cleaver says, “you wonder how much longer it will be viable.” If text inboxes get overrun, people may turn to some other form of communicating. But wherever they turn, campaigns likely won’t be far behind. □



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SHORT READS

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A better form of nationalism

“A biblically rooted American nationalism—one that **recognizes the nation as a diversity of tribes bound together by a common heritage and mutual loyalty**—is sorely lacking from American public debate,” writes *The Virtue of Nationalism* author Yoram Hazony. He laments how racists have adopted the term.

Ending polio

While **new wild poliovirus cases have dropped from 1,000 a day in 1988 to 20 so far this year**, “one child is too many,” writes Rotary International president Barry Rassin and World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. They warn that slowing elimination now could lead to a resurgence.

Accepting the tired, the poor

U.S. Representative Joe Kennedy III argues that fearing immigrants, while common in U.S. history, is misguided. **“Immigration has been an affirmation of our success, not a threat to it,”** he writes in an adapted introduction to his great-uncle JFK’s 1964 book, *Nation of Immigrants*.

THE RISK REPORT

Saudis try to go back to business as usual, as Khashoggi storm rages

By Ian Bremmer



THE SAUDIS MAY have finally admitted to the “accidental” killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but they still don’t have a coherent explanation

that exonerates Crown Prince (and King in waiting) Mohammed bin Salman, known widely as MBS. Few believe Khashoggi could have been killed without his order.

The response from political leaders is stiffening. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been noisily picking holes in the Saudi accounts of the killing. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has halted arms trade with the Saudis, while Canada is also considering a freeze. While U.S. President Donald Trump appears to be looking for a way to condemn the killing without blaming MBS or jeopardizing U.S. arms sales to the kingdom, lawmakers of both parties have demanded Saudi answers and a tough U.S. response.

Companies and investors, however, have been more cautious and nuanced in how they respond. Especially interesting has been their approach to MBS’s Future Investment Initiative, a high-profile gathering in Riyadh for those hoping to establish a commercial foothold in the modernizing Saudi kingdom. Khashoggi’s killing cast a chill over the summit and sent reputation-conscious executives scrambling for cover. Media companies were among the first to desert the event, perhaps fearful of being seen to cozy up to a regime that had silenced one of their own.

But by the time the summit began on Oct. 23, executives and investors were taking a more pragmatic approach. The head of Russia’s sovereign wealth fund led a sizable contingent to the event to ensure that losses for those sniffy about human rights would be Moscow’s gain. Financial institutions like Citigroup

and JPMorgan—each of which has investments and jobs riding on the kingdom’s success—chose to dispatch junior rather than senior representatives to signal unease with the Khashoggi story while acknowledging that business must continue.

There are good reasons for both politicians and businesses to distance themselves from or censure Riyadh in response to Khashoggi’s killing. If governments don’t impose a significant price on cold-blooded political murder, they’re showing MBS, and other autocrats, that it’s open season for the killing of critics, even on foreign soil. And shareholders are best served when company decisionmakers keep their distance from autocrats who fail to respect international rules in ways that dominate global headlines.

This is not to say foreign investors won’t continue doing business with the kingdom—they certainly will. A lot of companies in the U.S. and elsewhere have already reaped benefits from Saudi Arabia; dollars from the country’s \$250 billion Public Investment Fund have helped grow tech startups like Uber, WeWork and Slack. But the reputational risks that had been temporarily swept under the rug with the political rise of a “reformer” like MBS are now back to the forefront. And the mooted transformation of Saudi Arabia from petrostate to cutting-edge modern economy by 2030—always a long shot, even in the best circumstances—has lost critical momentum.

The attendance list at this year’s investor summit will surely say a lot about how Saudi Arabia is weathering the Khashoggi storm. But far more important for Mohammed bin Salman, and his country’s sizable ambitions, will be the success of the summit next year, and the year after that. Time will tell if business in Saudi Arabia can return to usual. □

The mooted transformation of Saudi Arabia from petrostate to cutting-edge modern economy by 2030 has lost critical momentum

FRONTIERS OF MEDICINE

The silent struggles of Alzheimer's care

By Jamie Ducharme

WHEN NANCY DALY WAS HELPING TO CARE FOR HER late mother, who had Alzheimer's disease, the stress was so great that she would often shut herself in a bathroom and cry into a towel. For more than two years, Daly regularly flew from her home in California to her mother's in Maryland, eventually to no recognition. "It was as if my entire childhood was erased, when she did not know me," says Daly, 59. "But I had to grit my teeth and bear it. It was my job to be there."

Daly's situation is likely familiar to many of the 16 million Americans who serve as unpaid caregivers to someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Because the tasks involved are so intimate and expensive to outsource, caregiving often falls to loved ones rather than professionals. And the number of caregivers is projected to grow: a recent study estimated that Alzheimer's diagnoses will more than double over the next four decades as the U.S. population ages.

Research shows that Alzheimer's caregivers face significant physical, financial and mental burdens. In an October survey by the Associated Press–NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, about a third of caregivers said they struggled to manage their own health and had skipped going to the doctor—even when they were sick or injured—because of their duties. That's especially concerning since dementia caregivers are themselves an aging group: 34% are now 65 or older.

Other research suggests that dementia caregivers have higher levels of stress and depression than other types of caregivers. That's likely because of the progressive nature of Alzheimer's, which eventually requires virtually around-the-clock care, says Elena Fazio, a health scientist administrator at the National Institute on Aging. "There's not an opportunity for respite," she says. "[People with Alzheimer's] have a host of behavioral symptoms"—like wandering and mood swings—"that make it more complicated." Worrying for a loved one's mental and physical safety, plus the isolating nature of the disease, increases the risk for stress, depression and anxiety, Fazio says.

Being a caregiver is also expensive and can interfere with one's career. Massachusetts this year joined a small but growing group of states to pass paid-family-leave laws, but there is currently no such law at the federal level. About 60% of Alzheimer's caregivers said they faced financial problems because of their role, according to a June survey from the nonprofit advocacy group Us Against Alzheimer's.

FOR DALY, THESE BURDENS took a toll over time. "With every visit, you watch everything decline," she says. Researchers and organizations are increasingly

6 ways to manage caregiver stress



Talk about it

Don't try to shoulder the burden alone. Seek emotional support from friends and family, caregiver hotlines or mental-health professionals. Support groups are also available.



Address stress

Finding positive ways to cope with stress, like meditation, yoga and breathing exercises, can help people manage the physical and emotional difficulties of caregiving.



Prioritize your health

Eating well, exercising and sleeping enough help provide the energy required for caregiving. And even light physical activity has been shown to reduce stress and lift mood.



Stay mindful

A recent study found that mindfulness training—the practice of staying in the moment—helped dementia caregivers understand and accept their own emotions and those of their loved one.



Seek training

Professionals can teach strategies for dealing with progressive Alzheimer's symptoms and suggest environmental adjustments that make care easier.



Use local resources

Beyond support groups, many communities offer programs like meal delivery, transportation assistance and medical advice for caregivers.

recognizing these stresses as a unique area of concern—and some potential solutions are emerging. A September study in *Alzheimer's & Dementia* found that mindfulness and emotional-awareness training eases caregiver stress. The National Institutes of Health is also studying how skills and stress-management training, along with social support, reduces depression and improves caregivers' mental health.

Just talking about the difficulties of their situation can be "life-giving and lifesaving," says Ruth Drew, a counselor who oversees the Alzheimer's Association's caregiver hotline. People often feel guilty complaining to family and friends, but the hotline is staffed by people with firsthand knowledge of Alzheimer's care. "There's nothing like talking to somebody else who's been where you are," Drew says. Doing so may soon get easier: researchers are exploring the impact of online support groups and live video conferencing between caregivers and Alzheimer's experts.

"Technology is not the answer to everything, but we're having to think more creatively," Fazio says. "The reality is that the demographic shifts and the growing number of people with dementia are going to mean that many more people are impacted by caregiving." □

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**Firearms,
for me, is
all about
freedom.**

*Rich Melton, 46, owner of Cover 6 Gear and
city councilman, Gardner, Kans.*

**The voice of the
middle has been
drowned out.**

*Joe Enderby, 36, owner of the Prairie's End
Hunt Club, Dallas*

**The gun
issue is the
single most
important
issue facing
America.**

*James Clark, 51, founder of
Better Family Life's St. Louis
Gun Violence De-escalation
Centers, St. Louis*

**I see gun
violence
every day.**

Dr. Laura Petrey, 50, trauma surgeon, Dallas

**I believe that without
the Second Amendment
we cannot have the
First Amendment.**

*Mauro Farinelli, clothing designer and amateur
competitive shooter, Alexandria, Va.*

he
en

**We just
need to
work
with each
other.**

*Jamison Sweet, 47, Marine Corps veteran
and sound mixer, St. Louis*

**Nothing says female
empowerment like
having total control
over your personal
safety.**

*Cassidy O'Neill, 20, graduate student at
University of North Texas, Denton, Texas*

**I see both
sides of why
guns are
important.**

*Charles Lowe, 42, sergeant, St. Louis
Metropolitan Police Department*

**I went
from being
anti-gun to
pro-gun in
seconds.**

*Megan Boland, 35, strategist and Second Amendment
advocate, Warrenton, Va.*

**SPECIAL
REPORT
GUNS IN
AMERICA**

THE SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND
BEGINS WITH
LISTENING—TO
EVERYONE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JR
STORY BY ABIGAIL ABRAMS AND MELISSA CHAN

THE NUMBERS

The complexity of the gun issue means the evidence for the policies under debate isn't always clear-cut. Here's the data behind the arguments that support different views.

GOOD GUYS WITH GUNS...

rarely thwart active shooters

Of 200 shootings that killed or wounded 1,274 victims from 2000 to 2015, the majority were resolved when the shooter ceased fire, committed suicide or fled, according to U.S. government statistics. Here's a breakdown of interventions:

30% Law-enforcement gunfire

13% Unarmed citizens' actions

4% Armed citizens' gunfire

SOURCE: FBI

stop bad guys with guns

Estimates on how often guns are used defensively range from fewer than 100,000 to more than a million times a year.

There were **235,700** violent crime incidents from 2007 to 2011 in which **victims used a firearm** to threaten or attack the offender.

In **32%** of those cases, the **offender was also armed**

SOURCE: DOJ, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

Deborah Wallace and Cindy Chester live about 30 miles from each other in Maryland. They ride the same freeways, read the same billboards, dress for the same weather. To some extent they have even encountered the same trauma. But for all that, it's not easy to locate their common ground.

Wallace teaches in a part of Baltimore where gun violence is so common that in the space of 15 months, seven of the students at her high school were shot dead. Atop a massage table during a sea cruise she had booked hoping to escape reality, "I just cried," Wallace says. "The masseuse thought she hurt me." The 63-year-old views guns as a plague that needs to be eradicated.

In suburban New Carrollton, Chester lives in regret that she did not have a gun at hand, and know how to use it, the day 10 years ago that her ex-boyfriend shot her. She lost her right leg and her unborn child. "It could have changed my whole story," says Chester, 31 and a "firm believer" in the Second Amendment. She wants other women to be empowered to take the action she could not.

Even though they may disagree on guns, their opinions are grounded in lived experience and expressed with a sincerity and respect often missing in the national debate. That was the most consistent takeaway from TIME's project on guns, an undertaking that involved three cities and 245 people over five months. The artist JR assembled the mural on this week's cover from separate photographs of every participant, each with a distinct view on firearms. They were situated in a tableau that evokes not only the spirit of debate associated with the Founding Fathers but something else as well—the unity that flows from a sense of shared enterprise. We saw the same thing in St. Louis; in Washington, D.C.; and in Dallas: We're all in this together.

Owning a gun remains one of the oldest and in many places most cherished traditions in America, but it's no longer as commonplace as it was 230 years ago. The right to "keep and bear arms" with a "well-regulated militia" was regarded as so central to the notion of liberty that it came second in the Bill of Rights only to the freedom to think and speak.

But when the topic is the Second Amendment, the exercise of the First Amendment lately amounts to talking past one another. The gun debate stands frozen in stalemate, advocates unable to agree even on the meaning of words. When one side appeals for "commonsense gun controls," the other hears only "control." When some say "law-abiding gun owners," others only hear "gun." How did we get here? Over time.

AMERICA WAS A RURAL NATION for most of its history. And in many places, firearms remain tools—for sport, for securing food, for a bond to connect generations. In Lewisville, Texas, 10-year-old Cooper Buck

spends many weekends hunting with her parents, something she has done since her grandfather gave her her first gun (it was pink) for Christmas when she was 5. "I really want to pass this down to my kids whenever I get older," she says after being photographed by JR while holding a gun in early September in Dallas. She hopes to show people across the country that her gun is not something to fear.

A firearm can be a beautiful thing, depending on the eye of the beholder. Wander the tables of a gun show and the combination of burnished walnut, tooled steel and exquisite balance might be fondly labeled *artisanal* by a city dweller. The craftsmanship displays tradition and care, including the solemn sort a parent brings to the instruction (often via an NRA safety course) of a youth in the responsible handling of a lethal weapon, a marker in the passage to adulthood.

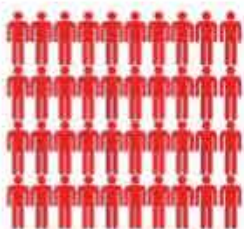
But fewer and fewer Americans learn about

MORE GUNS IN THE U.S....

contributes to more gun deaths

The firearm homicide rate is far higher in the U.S. than in other high-income countries. The firearm suicide rate is also higher.

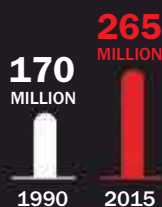
Gun homicides
PER 1 MILLION PEOPLE, 2016



SOURCE: IHME, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

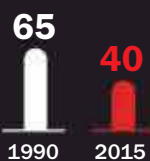
may deter criminal activity

The number of civilian firearms has grown.



Yet both murder and violent crime rates have generally fallen.

Gun homicides
PER 1 MILLION PEOPLE



Violent crime
PER 100,000 PEOPLE



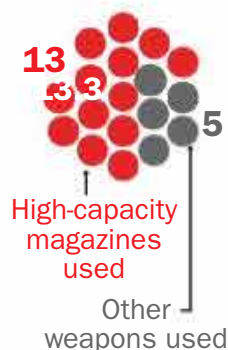
SOURCES: RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION; CDC; FBI

SOME WEAPONS AND ACCESSORIES...

don't belong in civilian hands

Weapons with high-capacity magazines were used in 15 of 133 shootings involving at least four victims from 2009 to 2015. These instances had more casualties.

Average number of victims shot



Average number of victims killed

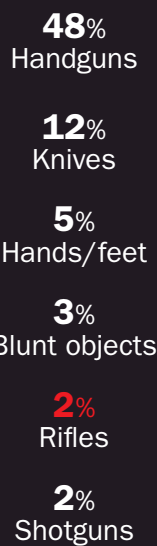


SOURCE: EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY

are wrongly vilified

Rifles—including the popular AR-15—are used in far fewer homicides than other weapons such as handguns and knives.

Weapons used
IN 66,231 HOMICIDES, 2012-16



17% UNKNOWN GUN
9% OTHER (NON-GUN)

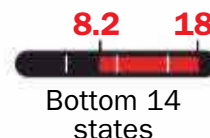
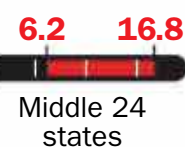
SOURCE: FBI

STRICTER GUN-CONTROL LAWS...

reduce gun deaths

Given all gun deaths—homicides, suicides and accidents—states with stronger gun laws have fewer gun fatalities.

Gun death rates
PER 100,000 PEOPLE, 2007-10



SOURCE: BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

won't stop gangs and outlaws

Gangs are responsible for much of the country's violent crime. In general, criminals don't follow gun laws. Convicted prison inmates who had a gun at the time of their offense had acquired it through back channels.

Source of firearm
2004



SOURCES: FBI; DOJ, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

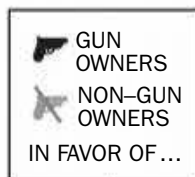
firearms tramping in the woods. Most today live in a suburb, neither city nor country, and in many ways the culture of gun ownership toggles between the two. Rural culture often evokes a defiant individualism that draws on the mythology of the American frontier, and a resistance to regulation as righteous and absolutist as anything free-speech advocates marshal in defense of their own favorite amendment. Gun owners are often gun enthusiasts, and a majority of owners have more than one gun. Research shows that while there are more guns in America than there were 20 years ago, they are owned by a smaller share of the population. Roughly 40% of Americans live in a gun-owning household, but just 30% own guns, according to recent Pew Research Center and Gallup surveys. Other studies have put the percentage of those who personally own guns even lower, at about 22%. And only 4.4% of Americans over 16 actually hunt.

The view from urban America is markedly

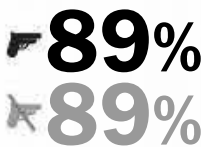
different. In cities like St. Louis, which has lost a significant chunk of its population to the suburbs in recent decades and frequently has the highest murder rate in the country, not everyone experiences gun violence in equal measure. Black Americans are more likely to be shot than their white counterparts, and community leaders say much of the gun culture is tied to a lack of access to education, jobs and opportunity. "If we had better job opportunities, better mentors, better role models... then we wouldn't see this as much," says Emeara Burns, a 20-year-old college student and activist who grew up hearing gunshots in her St. Louis neighborhood.

Shootings are a common occurrence across the country. On an average day, six children are injured or killed in unintentional shootings, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). From 2012 to 2016, the last years for which data is available, an average of 35,000

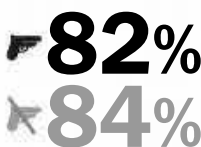
COMMON GROUND?



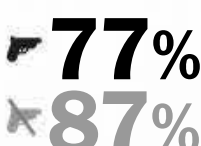
Preventing people with **mental illnesses** from purchasing guns



Barring **gun purchases** by people on no-fly or watch lists



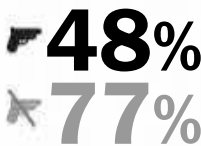
Requiring **background checks** for private sales and at gun shows



Creating a **federal database** to track all gun sales



Banning **assault-style weapons**



SOURCE: PEW

Americans died from gun violence every year, according to the CDC. Nearly two-thirds are suicides. Homicides by gun, after declining from their peak in the 1990s, spiked 31% from 2014 to 2016, the CDC found. What more the CDC might have found we cannot say; Congress voted in 1996 to limit the scope of research into gun deaths and injuries by the country's premier health agency.

Similarly, there is wide disagreement over how to count mass shootings in America. The biggest point of contention is the minimum number of victims that qualifies as "mass." There is, however, no question that the maximum number keeps climbing. The record for deadliest shooting in U.S. history having been set at 49 at Orlando's Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016, stood for just over a year. It was eclipsed by the slaughter of 58 people at a Las Vegas music festival on Oct. 1, 2017.

School shootings, astonishing a generation ago, have taken on the element of routine—both in the frequency with which they happen and in the public mind. "Active shooter" drills are now familiar to many kindergartners. And parents in suburbs see their children off in the morning with the pit in their stomach parents in inner cities have felt for decades.

At the start of the school year, Beth Poquette Drews asked her music class at a Dallas middle school to create a "respect agreement" outlining how they would treat one another for the rest of the school year. "Usually the answers we receive are things like 'Don't interrupt,' 'Keep your hands to yourself,' 'Listen to each other'—the typical things you would expect a child to say," she says. "But this year the first one that came up on the list was 'Don't shoot each other.'"

The school shootings also underscore the utter paralysis in our politics. In a Gallup poll taken in March, 67% of Americans said they wanted stricter laws on firearms sales, the highest percentage for any Gallup poll since 1993. A Quinnipiac survey found almost every American, 97%, in support of universal background checks. Yet Congress hasn't passed the Manchin-Toomey measure to expand background checks, first introduced after 20 first-graders were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012.

"It's hard for people to settle for the modest progress or the modest change," says Senator Pat Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican. Attention tends to gather instead at one extreme or the other, where maximalist positions generate enthusiasm among the confidently certain. In Texas, state representative Jonathan Stickland, a Republican, wants to remove permit requirements on gun owners in an approach known as "constitutional carry." And in Northern California, Representative Eric Swalwell, a Democrat, stokes gun owners' worst fears by proposing that they be required to sell their military-style semiautomatic assault rifles to the government, in a "mandatory buyback."

As Colin Goddard, 33, a survivor of the 2007

Virginia Tech shooting, puts it, "Guns are a symbol for a lot of people, and they mean different things. I think the symbol to some Americans is of tradition, of family, of history. And others I think view it as a symbol of death, fear, destruction. And when you have such different values and feelings associated with one symbol like that, I think it helps explain why this issue and guns is so difficult to talk about."

WE DIVIDE OURSELVES. We cluster around the warmth of shared opinions, separate ourselves by disposition, neighborhood or, especially, news feed. Joe Enderby, a 36-year-old who owns a bird-hunting club in the Dallas area, calls himself a strong supporter of the Second Amendment. But he keeps mostly to himself his parallel thought, "There is nothing to fear in gun regulation," because he knows what the reaction will be. "In 2018, the middle is a very difficult place to be," he says. "You have to be on polar-opposite sides, and I think the polarities are the loudest."

Money also matters, and not just in rewarding or punishing candidates. Firearms are a \$17 billion industry, and paranoia can juice demand. Gun and ammo sales soared when Barack Obama was President, as gun owners stockpiled whatever rumor said was about to be outlawed by the feds. (Nothing was.) After Trump was elected, helped along by \$30 million from the NRA, sales slowed and have not fully recovered. In March, Remington filed for bankruptcy. TIME repeatedly invited the NRA to participate in this project, but ultimately the organization declined.

The same polarizing political system shapes the side advocating for limits on guns. In addition to their own stereotypes and intolerances, they must lug into the public arena the burden of justifying regulation. In other words, differentiating between the impulse to do *something* vs. doing something likely to achieve the desired results—a challenge that remains when the welling emotions summoned by a grieving parent have ebbed. There are reasons the status quo is a standoff.

Yet as we learned from listening to many of the voices in our project, two clear themes—responsibility and the need for extraordinary care around lethal force—are common to both the ethos of gun ownership and the stated goals of those who seek controls. Which commends them as logical starting points for a conversation that takes place not through elected surrogates, and not online, but face to face, where Americans still tend to get along pretty well.

"Guns aren't going anywhere," says Jamison Sweet, 47, a gun owner in St. Louis who served in the Marine Corps for 15 years. "We need to come together to just listen." That's the first step in bridging the divide, says Holly Sullivan, a 36-year-old single mother and firearms instructor who lives in Connecticut, about seven miles from Sandy Hook Elementary School. "If we could educate on who we are and what we believe," she says, "I think we could find common ground." □



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

25 PEOPLE SHARE THEIR VIEWS—AND THE EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPED THEM

THE WRONGLY ACCUSED

*With an AR-15 slung across his shoulder, **Mark Hughes**, an activist and tax preparer, joined hundreds of protesters at a Black Lives Matter rally in downtown Dallas on July 7, 2016. Hughes openly carried his rifle—a legal act under Texas law—for the first time. It was a symbolic response, he says, to fatal police shootings of black men including Philando Castile, who was killed during a traffic stop in Minnesota after disclosing to an officer that he was armed but licensed. The rally turned into tragedy when a sniper killed five police officers in what is considered the worst attack on U.S. law enforcement since Sept. 11. Before the real gunman was identified, the Dallas police department wrongly labeled Hughes a suspect, tweeting out his photo in a plea to the public to “please help us find him.” He was questioned for hours before being released. Now Hughes, 36, is suing the city and the department for what he says were civil rights violations. (The city and police department declined to comment.) Hughes is still a proud gun owner but says he thinks twice about exercising his legal right to carry in public.*

‘It’s dangerous being a black man in America with a gun.’

THE MAYOR

When she was elected in 2017, **Lyda Krewson** became the first woman mayor in St. Louis history. Over two decades ago, her husband was killed during an attempted carjacking. As mayor, the 65-year-old Democrat has appointed a new police chief with a mandate to rebuild trust amid community calls for reform. Krewson says she has been frustrated with the Missouri legislature, particularly after the state passed a permitless carry law letting virtually any adult who is not a convicted felon carry a gun without a permit or training. “Mayors of urban areas ought to be able to have some say over what sort of guns can be carried,” she says.

My husband was murdered on March 23, 1995, in front of our house. My daughter was 5, my son was 2. We had eaten dinner, we were headed to Target to get river shoes—you know, the shoes that you put on your kids so they can walk in the river on the rocks. So we were at Target, we got the river shoes. My son who’s 2 starts having a fit. So we’re like, O.K., it’s time to go. We get in the car, I get him in the back seat in a car seat. My daughter’s in the back seat and I slide in with them. My husband’s driving the car.

We pull up in front of our house. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a guy standing on the corner, and I see a guy at the driver’s-side window of our car and he has a big gun, a long gun. I saw him for an instant. I imagine my husband saw him for an instant. My husband put the car in reverse. And as he put the car in reverse, the guy standing at his window shot my husband in the neck through the window. It went across the car, went into the passenger-side door on the inside and went out that door. So had I been sitting in the passenger seat, I probably would have been shot too. And so that changes your life forever. It changes your kids’ lives forever.





THE PROTECTOR

*Frustrated by police killings of black men, **Shetamia Taylor** took her four young sons to the 2016 Dallas protest. When gunfire erupted, the retail worker threw her body over one of her sons while the others fled. One of the sniper's bullets struck her in the calf. Now Taylor, 40, has a metal plate and a dozen screws in her leg. She continues to struggle with the shooting's aftermath and has become more politically active: she found a new job as a campaign canvass manager and is planning a run for city council in her hometown of Mesquite, Texas, next year.*

I was nervous everywhere I went. I felt like something at any time could happen. I'm sitting in my home, and people are still setting fireworks around my house, and I'm freaking out. I'm sitting on my couch because I can't move. I'm paralyzed in fear some nights. I'm crying. I'm thinking, What can I do in this situation that I'm in right now to protect my family? It felt like breakdown after breakdown. And it was like, How much more weak can I be? How much more crumpled up can I become?

I changed my mind-set and became a gun owner. Because I did feel helpless and because I felt weak and because I felt like I was not protecting my children, I decided to become a gun owner. It was just something that I knew I had to do for me. It kind of helped me feel as though I would be able to protect myself and my children if need be.

And I know that sounds strange, but unless you went through or been through what I have, you wouldn't understand.

THE SCHOOL-SHOOTING SURVIVOR

On April 16, 2007, **Colin Goddard** was sitting in an intermediate French class at Virginia Tech when another student attacked the campus. Goddard was shot four times in the hips, knee and shoulder. In all, 32 victims were killed. Goddard, now a 33-year-old business-development director living in Bethesda, Md., advocates for a number of stricter gun regulations, including comprehensive background checks.

I still have three of the four bullets inside my body today that broke up into small pieces. Back in 2007, doctors took the stuff out that was in a major joint or organ, but they said it wouldn't be a problem for the rest of your life. And over 10 years later, I found out that I had the beginnings of lead poisoning because of the fragments that remained inside my body in different places. I'm still trying to figure out what to do about the lead poisoning that's happening—the lead inside my body that toxicologists say has to come out, and trauma surgeons say we can't take out.

It just blows me away that in 2018, with the hundreds of thousands of Americans who get shot with guns and bullets every year, we don't have a good understanding medically about how to treat people with retained bullet fragments for lead exposure. And I have to navigate this field by myself, in the dark. I've got to think that we have to do better as a country to treat this problem that's only affecting more and more people.

I survived the shooting. I dealt with the physical trauma. Ten years later, it's not over. This is a whole new chapter. It's hard. It takes you back.





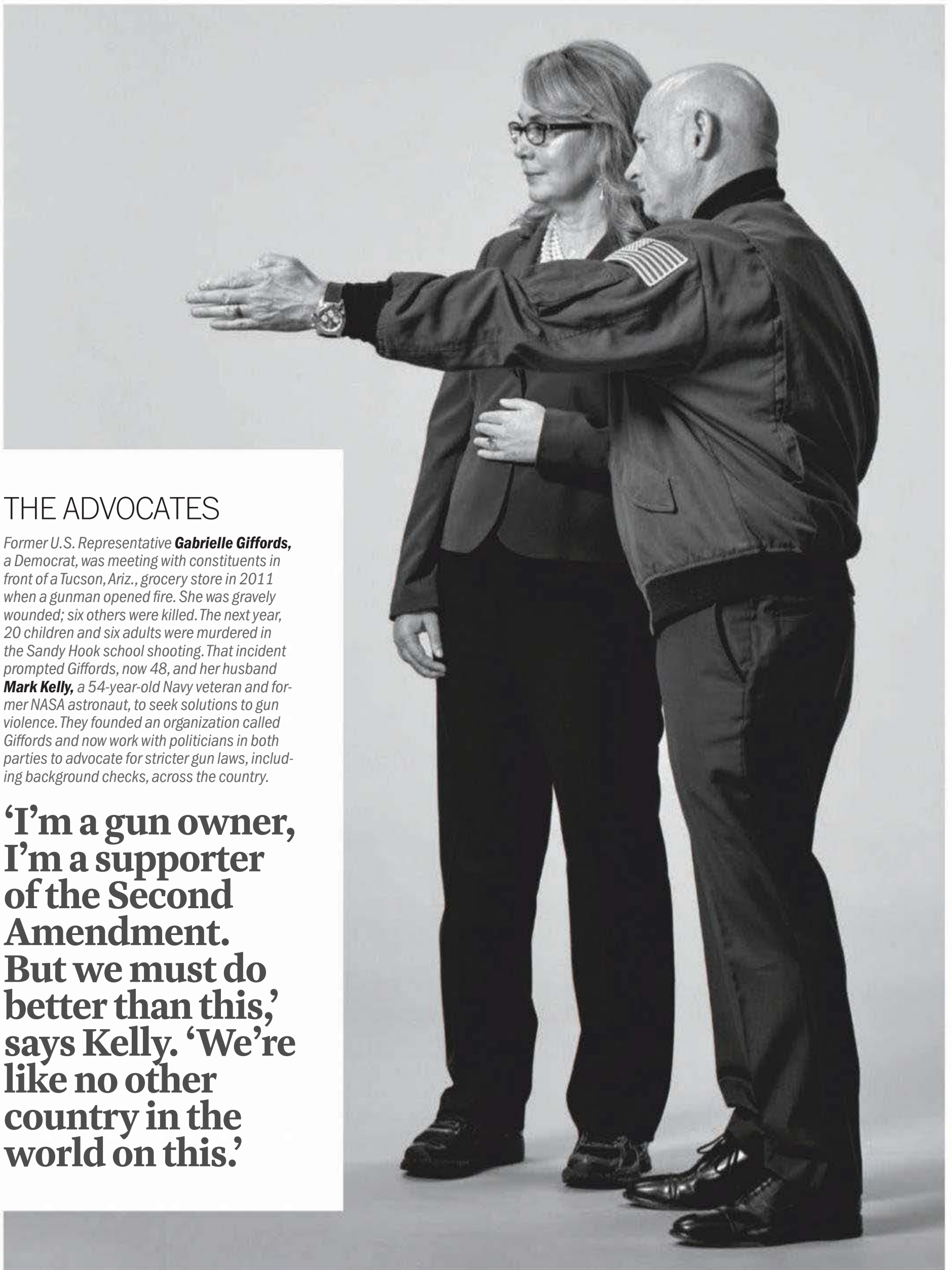
THE LAWMAKER

*Republican legislators were practicing for a bipartisan charity baseball game on June 14, 2017, when a gunman opened fire. Representative **Steve Scalise**, the House majority whip from Louisiana, was critically injured by a bullet in the hip. He survived after multiple surgeries. Three others were wounded before police—including officers from Scalise's security detail—shot and killed the assailant.*

A strong Second Amendment is critical to keeping our communities safe. I experienced firsthand just how important it is that there are people with guns that can counter bad people that are out there.

Right after the shooting, there were people that just expected that somehow my views on guns would change. It's easy for people to get reactionary. I think we all know the honest answer to that is there's no single magic solution to this. That horrible incident only solidified my strong beliefs that you want law-abiding citizens to be able to defend themselves and others, because there are bad guys out there. And if only the bad guys have weapons, then that means everybody else is vulnerable.

I've experienced both sides of this debate. But ultimately it was people with guns that were able to counter the shooter and save the rest of us.



THE ADVOCATES

Former U.S. Representative **Gabrielle Giffords**, a Democrat, was meeting with constituents in front of a Tucson, Ariz., grocery store in 2011 when a gunman opened fire. She was gravely wounded; six others were killed. The next year, 20 children and six adults were murdered in the Sandy Hook school shooting. That incident prompted Giffords, now 48, and her husband **Mark Kelly**, a 54-year-old Navy veteran and former NASA astronaut, to seek solutions to gun violence. They founded an organization called Giffords and now work with politicians in both parties to advocate for stricter gun laws, including background checks, across the country.

‘I’m a gun owner, I’m a supporter of the Second Amendment. But we must do better than this,’ says Kelly. ‘We’re like no other country in the world on this.’



THE YOUNG ACTIVIST

When thousands of students marched out of classrooms for the National School Walkout demonstrations in April, **Havana Chapman-Edwards** stood alone outside her Virginia elementary school. Chapman-Edwards, 7, says she was “really sad” when she realized she was the only student in her school to participate in the massive protest against gun violence. The second-grader says she wanted to honor children killed in school shootings.

‘Kids getting shot—it’s just heartbreaking to me because kids should just be kids.’

THE VETERAN

As a teenager in Texas, **Sung Song** hated guns so much he once delivered an impassioned speech opposing the Second Amendment for a high school competition. Then he joined the U.S. Army. Song, 42, is now a respiratory therapist and remains an avid marksman.


Back in high school, I was vehemently against guns. I was in this thing called Academic Decathlon, and we had to do a five-minute speech in front of judges. That was my topic: gun control. It was about how the Second Amendment was outdated. I thought it didn't apply since the environment had changed. I believed it 100%. I didn't have an understanding of guns back then. I never used them. My parents never owned guns. I never really got exposed to guns growing up. Guns were scary because we didn't know anything about them.

But as I started to learn more and get trained in its usage and its safety, I saw the benefits of gun ownership. In the military, you take an oath to the Constitution. You are automatically supposed to support everything in there and defend everything in there, including the Second Amendment. I feel like I learned more about the world, about guns, about gun safety and gun violence. I became comfortable with it.

It is a dangerous weapon, but it can be very safe when you know how to use it and take the proper precautions. It's like a car. If you're a kid, you're scared of a car when you don't know how to drive. But once you get familiar with it and you know how to use it responsibly, it shouldn't be a problem. There are irresponsible people, but it doesn't change the fact that the car itself is within the responsibility of the person.

I would tell my younger self that you don't actually know that much. You'll keep on learning. Try to explore all sides before you make a decision.





‘When I became a principal, I didn’t think I would be going to funerals. I didn’t think that I would be going to wakes and I would be telling parents I’m sorry.’

THE PRINCIPAL

*In one 15-month stretch, **Tammatha Woodhouse** lost seven of her students at Baltimore’s Excel Academy high school to gun violence. Woodhouse, 49, moved this summer to run Renaissance Academy, another Baltimore high school. She’ll never forget her first hospital visit to see a student who had been shot. He had a bullet wound in the middle of his head. This was Woodhouse’s first exposure to gun violence, which she now describes as an epidemic.*



THE POLICE OFFICER

*For 19 years, St. Louis police sergeant **Thomas Lake** served as an officer in his hometown. Then, in November 2016, he was shot twice in the face while on patrol. After recovering in the hospital, Lake was left with shrapnel in his face and PTSD that prevented him from returning to active duty. The shooting “took my life from me,” says Lake, 48. Now he is learning to code and hopes to retire from the police department soon so he can find another way to serve people—through computer programming.*

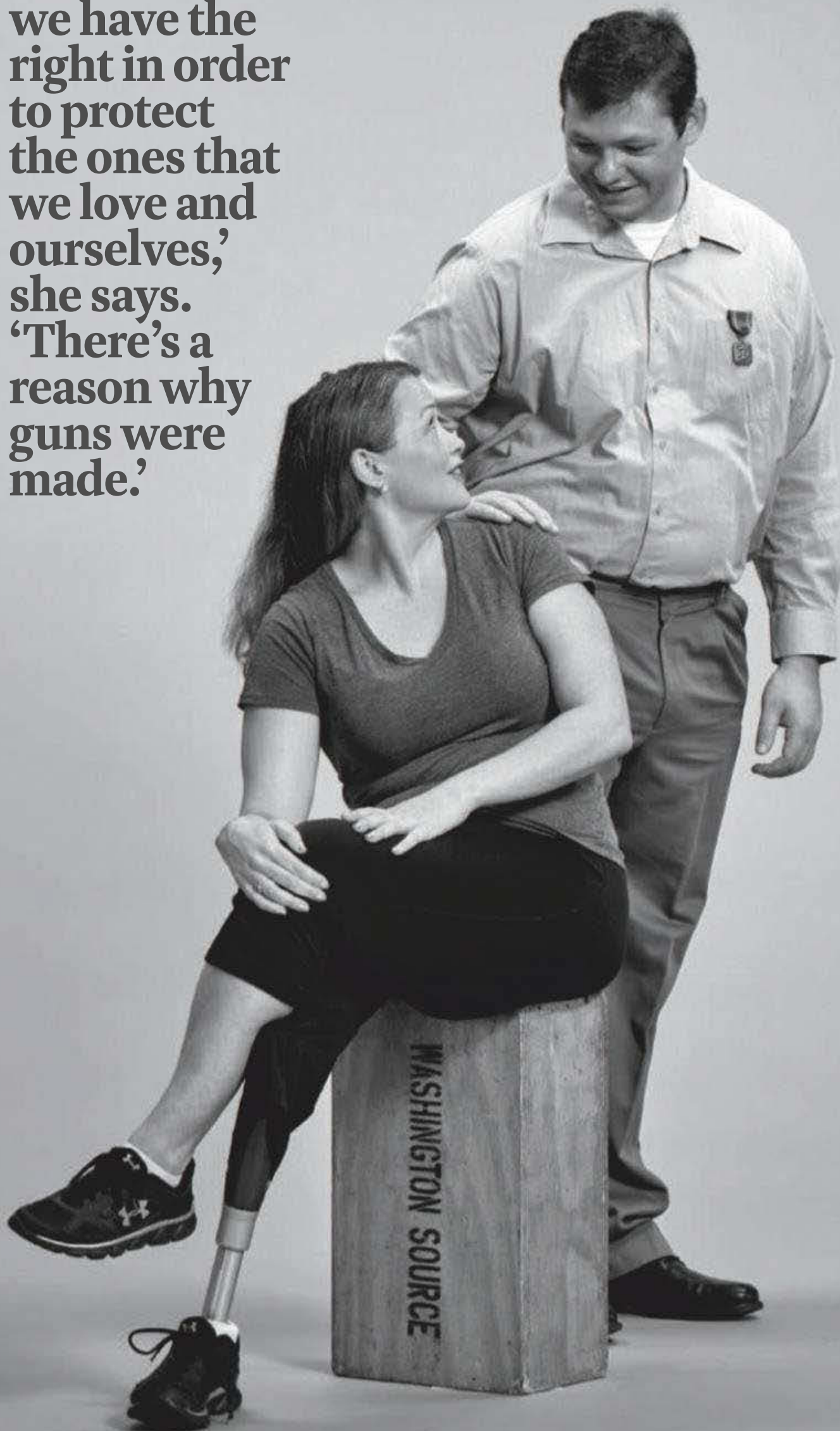
So I was on patrol in my neighborhood where I live and grew up. There was a violent guy that was going around hurting people, and we were looking for him. And it was a Sunday night, it was cold, it was Nov. 20, 2016, 7:30 p.m. I was kind of uneasy about what was going on. So I was on the phone with my father, and I was stopped at a stoplight, and I had let my guard down a little bit, which is something I usually didn't do. And I saw the guy coming up on my left side, and there was cars all around me. I couldn't really go anywhere. I knew the minute I saw him that it was going to be bad. I was convincing myself it wasn't going to happen, but my gut was screaming at me to get out of there. He pulled up, and I took my eyes off him for a minute and I looked down to roll the window down. When I looked back up, I saw the 9-mm with the extended magazine come over the top of the backseat, and he fired the gun and all I saw was a muzzle flash. I didn't realize I was shot.

I'm in a marked police car, in my uniform, and the light turns green and all these cars just drive away. Like they either didn't know or they didn't care what happened. For me, that has probably been the most alone I've ever felt in my life. A guy came up from behind me and he goes: “Officer, are you O.K.?” I said, “No sir, I'm not O.K. I've been shot, I need some help.”

My police brain kicked back in. So I got on the radio and I gave the dispatcher a description of the car and where the car went to, that I had been shot and that I needed help. One of my best friends heard the call. He's the first guy on the scene. They walk up to the car, my dad is still on the phone. And Kevin said, “Oh sh-t, he's dead.” And my father heard that. When your dad's your hero, you don't ever want that to happen.

That changed my life. But as a person I'm still the same guy. I still want to serve and I want to help people, and I have to find a new way to do that now.

‘I believe that we have the right in order to protect the ones that we love and ourselves,’ she says. ‘There’s a reason why guns were made.’



THE SELF-DEFENSE ADVOCATE

*Growing up in a military family, **Cindy Chester** had guns in her childhood home and learned from an early age that firearms needed to be handled safely. But she says she wasn't prepared for the moment 10 years ago when her then boyfriend pointed a gun at her right leg and fired. Her wounds ended her 4½-month pregnancy and required amputation. At the time, her brother **Sean Chester** was serving in the Marine Corps in Iraq. The traumatic incident brought the siblings closer together, and years later they still share a faith in the protection provided by firearms. Now Cindy, 31, is a new mother who advocates for amputees and more broadly for women to be prepared to defend themselves. If she had owned a gun when she was attacked, she says, "maybe my story would have changed."*



THE SIBLING

*After her brother was shot and killed by an assailant during a domestic-violence incident, **Cheeraz Gormon** founded the Sibling Support Network. This summer, Gormon, a 40-year-old activist in St. Louis, launched a nationwide survey seeking to understand the emotional and psychological effects of losing a sibling to violence.*

My youngest brother, John, was murdered Aug. 14, 2013. I flew home the next morning. I remember being upstairs in my mother's bedroom, and I went downstairs and I got one of her really good knives. And I was looking for a place to cut myself. I've never been a person who self-mutilates at all.

I put the knife down, and I went downstairs and I told my mom. I just went to my mom. I was like, "Can I call some of my friends who were like mental-health professionals to give people help?" Because far too often, we don't get those services at all in our community when somebody is murdered. So, we turned my brother's repast into a community mental-health space. So that's when I really started laying the groundwork for Sibling Support Network.

So following my brother's trial, I'm looking for resources for myself and couldn't find anything to what I felt like were my unique needs. Because you know, losing a sibling is like you got to care for your parents and you got to care for the other siblings and everybody else around you. And it's all this assumption that somehow you're O.K.

And when I found out that there was nothing out there, I took it upon myself to say people have to know that we exist. And it's time for a policy change. When we look at some of our most pressing public-health issues—everything from death from completed suicides to our incarceration rate, the recidivism rate, poverty, underemployment, unemployment—I'm pretty sure that a lot of people who have lost their siblings to violent crime are people that fall into those categories. I want to say: What does that person need, and how can we help them heal and be whole so they can integrate back into life?

‘It’s disheartening as a gun owner and as an NRA member to continually get beat down and continually to get bullied.’



THE CHAMPION

*In the world of competitive shooting, **Dianna Muller** is a celebrity. A former Tulsa, Okla., police officer and rodeo horse racer, Muller says she got serious about shooting sports in the mid-2000s and quickly “fell in love with the people.” She sold her horses and her farm to focus on guns and went on to win the women’s title at the 2015 NRA World Shooting Championship. Now she’s using her fame to advocate for the rights of gun owners around the country. “People who don’t understand, who don’t have the education, are making the decisions,” she says. “That’s the scary part.” So Muller, 48, founded the D.C. Project, a nonpartisan group of women from all 50 states who travel to the capital each year to talk with their elected representatives about the Second Amendment. She says she carries this goal of understanding into all her interactions. “If we don’t communicate with the other side, then we’re definitely on the losing platform,” Muller says.*



THE TRAUMA SURGEON

*As director of trauma at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Dr. **Michael Foreman**, 65, sees a steady flow of shooting victims in his emergency room. On the night of July 7, 2016, police cars arrived carrying wounded from the mass shooting at the Black Lives Matter rally.*

I'm probably the controversy in many ways. I take care of people with gunshot wounds. I've also been a lifetime shooter. I'm what most people would refer to as a gun nut. I grew up with guns. I've shot guns all of my life. I enjoy them very much. What I don't enjoy is what they do to people. I love guns, and I hate gunshot wounds.

When I go shooting, I tell people it's really no different than golf. A lot of people go out and they cause an object to go from one place to another place in an accurate fashion, and that's what I do when I go shooting. It gives me great enjoyment, and I don't want to give up what is rightfully mine.

My biggest concern is that we're focusing on the wrong thing. What we need to be focusing on is violence. I can tell you as a trauma surgeon, I have seen people killed with any variety of objects. Guns make it a little easier perhaps. But I will tell you that a brick or a bat or a fist or a knife makes you just as dead as the bullet does. Everyone talks about commonsense gun control. I'm all in favor of that. I just don't have any idea what it is.



THE PASTOR

*As pastor of New Exodus church in Cahokia, Ill., just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, **Bryan Moore** always considered the Bible to be his protection. But when one of his congregants became the victim of a brutal attack, Moore says, he had an epiphany: he decided he needed another way to defend his flock. So he headed to a shooting range and spent the next two years training to become a certified firearms instructor. Now Moore, 38, teaches regular concealed-carry classes in addition to giving sermons.*

‘I was raised that God was a magician, he was a protector. In the black community there was a time where we needed to hope and pray that way ... Well, that was me before this experience, and now this is me.’

THE COMPETITOR

Mia Farinelli, 14, travels many weekends during the school year to compete in shooting matches. The ninth-grader from Alexandria, Va., participates in a variety of events, but her main focus is 3-Gun, which involves shooting a pistol, a rifle and a shotgun while navigating an obstacle course.

I started shooting with my dad when I was around 7, and I started shooting a lot of bull's-eyes. And so a few years later, I went shooting and once again, I did really good. This was when my dad was getting into competitive shooting, and he was receiving a jersey from this range. He got this box which had his jersey in it, and he opened it up, and underneath his was one labeled MIA FARINELLI.

So I went into the range the next day and they said, "Well, now that you have a jersey, you have to shoot a match." So I kept shooting these local matches near us. And then I shot the state match and I did very, very well, and so I started shooting these state matches and now I'm the champion of my divisions in multiple states. I travel pretty much all over the United States to do my competitive shooting.

I want people to know that I'm doing this because it's my passion. I'm doing it because this is a sport. The community is so nice. Not like it's portrayed to be in movies. Safety is the priority when you're shooting. When I would tell some kids about it at school, they'd come up to me in the hallway and be like, "Oh, you're going to be the next school shooter." It makes me feel really bad because it's something I put a lot of passion into, and I put a lot of effort into. I try to work on teaching everybody about how safe it is. It's just like they're not really listening to me. They're not really hearing what I have to say. They're kind of just painting an image in their mind about what they want me to be, or what they think I am.





‘We don’t need more teachers with guns in the classroom. I believe what we need is more resources, more counselors to support our kids.’

THE TEACHER

An eight-year teaching veteran, **Josue Tamarez Torres** was named one of three Dallas public schools’ Teachers of the Year last school year. He says the reason he wanted to be a teacher in the first place—“changing students’ lives”—still resonates. But as he prepared math lessons for his fourth-graders this fall, he found it hard to dismiss the specter of school shootings. “I am constantly thinking ... ‘Is my school going to be the next school where a shooter comes in?’” Tamarez Torres is a gun owner himself and says he doesn’t want to infringe on anyone’s Second Amendment rights. But he doesn’t believe arming teachers will help. Instead, Tamarez Torres wants lawmakers to find common ground around issues like background checks aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people. “I’m just making sure that our kids are protected,” he says.



THE HUNTERS

*Like many families in Texas, the Bucks have hunted for generations. **Michelle Buck**, above with husband **Austin Buck**, says her father taught her to hunt when she was a young girl, and now her 10-year-old daughter **Cooper Buck**, right, enjoys the family tradition. The Bucks take their two children on frequent hunting trips, which offer an escape from the hectic pace of work and school—and a chance to bring back meat for homemade quail and pheasant dumplings.*

‘[Hunting] has made all the difference in the very strong woman that I am today,’ Michelle Buck says. ‘Here I am with a degree and a good job and a great family and husband who shares the same values and morals and ethics and ... we deposit those things into our kids.’



THE LEADER

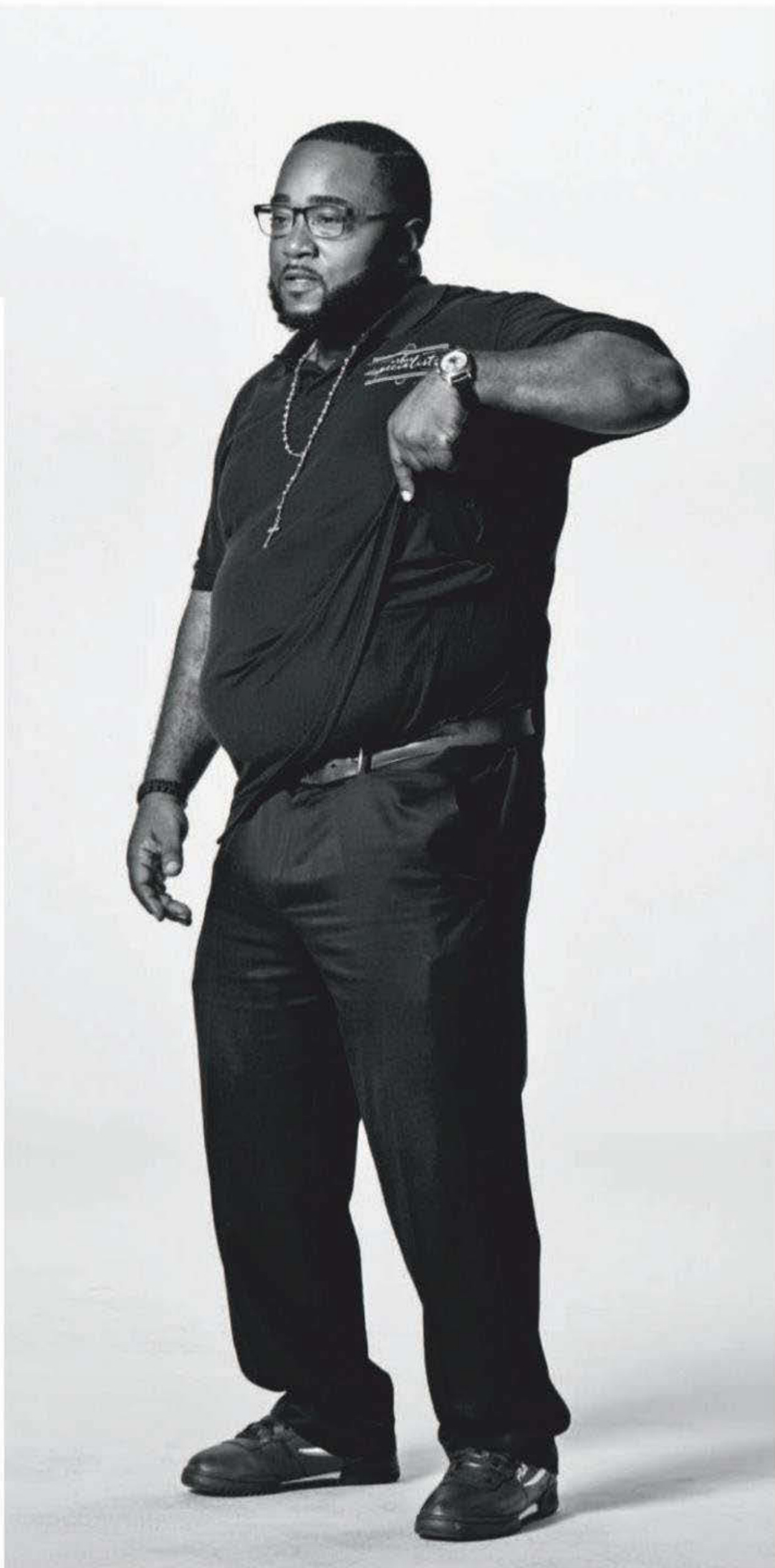
At 13, **Antong Lucky** became a top member of a Dallas gang. After serving nearly four years in prison for drug- and gang-related charges, he decided to forge a different path. Now Lucky, 42, mentors young people as national director for Urban Specialists, a nonprofit that works to end gun violence.

I come from a family born in poverty in the projects. The name of the game was survival. Guns, drugs, it was just so pervasive. One day, I went to school. About 40 to 50 gang members waited. I just heard somebody say, "Shoot him, shoot him!" This guy steps out, lifts his pistol, and this girl jumped in front of me. He ended up shooting the girl.

I think that was the single incident that made me say, I had enough. A cousin and a couple of friends of mine started the first Bloods gang in Dallas. We vowed to become the most deadly, vicious gang in the city, and we did.

Over the next couple of years, my neighborhood did some of the most heinous and horrendous acts against other gangs ... drive-bys on school buses and stuff like that. We used everything—automatic weapons, the whole nine yards. I lost a lot of close friends, family members. Eventually, I ended up in prison.

It was in prison that I realized some important things that changed the course and trajectory of my life. My heart had changed in prison. Once I got out, I began to work to end the cycle of gangs and guns in our communities. I wanted people to understand that we got a lot of stuff in common and that we needed to work together. I want people to know that redemption, transformation, is real. There's hope. We can make using guns and being violent nonexistent in the mind, if we keep working on it.



‘People can debate that any way they want to,’ he says, ‘but the guns don’t kill people, the people kill people.’



THE PARENTS

As **Sam and Paulette Thompson** were watching coverage of the July 7, 2016, Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas, their son Brent was shot and killed. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit officer was among the five police officers gunned down that day. The family’s tragedy was compounded more than a year later: William Thompson, Brent Thompson’s 19-year-old son, took his own life with a gun. Despite their losses, the Thompsons say they support the Second Amendment, though Paulette adds, “There should be stricter controls over who can buy guns.”

ESSAYS

**CAN WE
HEAR EACH
OTHER
AGAIN?**

FROM BLIND RAGE TO BLIND FAITH,
READING NOVELS TO CASTING
BALLOTS, SIX WRITERS ON THE
PROMISE AND PITFALLS OF BRIDGING
AMERICA'S POLITICAL CHASM

THE ENDURING EMPTINESS OF OUR PUBLIC RAGE

BY PHIL KLAY

RECENTLY A FRIEND ASKED ME, WITH WHAT I thought was a hint of suspicion in his voice, why my writing was so “apolitical.” It’s not the first time it’s happened, but it always surprises me. I’ve written about military policy under both President Obama and President Trump. I’ve questioned what we’re doing and tried to write about what flawed policy looks and feels like to those tasked with carrying it out. To me, this is inescapably and obviously engaged political speech.

But to my friend, a smart guy who nevertheless spends a surprising amount of his time online coming up with inventive ways to crassly insult his political enemies, there was something lacking. Something to do with my inclination to be “unfailingly polite,” as he called it. I try to avoid making personal attacks, or casting my arguments in the typical good/evil binary of partisan politics. My friend is a veteran of a tough deployment to Afghanistan. He’s acutely conscious of how thin our public discussion of the wars has been. And, more than anything, he’s acutely conscious of the ways our collective failure as a society to demand serious oversight of the wars has direct, physical, violent impact on people we know and care about.

If you look back on the human waste of the past 17 years and are not filled with rage, is there not something wrong with you? And if you want to be honest in public debate, if you don’t want to engage in the kind of lies and obfuscations and double-speak proliferating across our body politic, don’t you have to let that rage slip into your speech?

It’s a fair point. Rage seems like a perfectly natural and justified response to our broader political dysfunction. From health care to tax policy to climate change, we are failing to meaningfully address issues whose impact can be measured in human lives. And invitations to civil debate can sometimes be nothing more than a con carried out by malign actors within the system. The conservative entertainer Ann Coulter used to play a game where she’d say something horrible and then, when questioned about it, shift to a thinly connected but defensible argument, like when she claimed on the *Today* show that she’d written that a group of politically active 9/11 widows were “enjoying their husbands’ deaths” only to call attention to how they were “using their grief in order to

make a political point.” The game, one suspects, is less about sparking debate than indulging in a kind of performative contempt. So why play that game, when the simple extension of a middle finger is both easier and more honest? It will, at the very least, be more fun.

But performative rage is fun for both sides. A few months ago, I did a reading in Brooklyn with an author who’d written a harrowing indictment of our border policy. But because the author was once a Border Patrol agent, a group of young people showed up to protest. Rather than a thoughtful discussion in which an insider explained how the U.S. brings its power to bear on the vulnerable, the audience sat through an often comic display of self-righteous slogan chanting. At one point, an audience member began cursing the protesters out in Spanish, ending his rant with, “Are white people always like this?” I could feel the audience’s politics ticking slightly rightward. I doubt any immigrants were helped by the spectacle.

That kind of engagement in the public sphere takes the hard pragmatic choices of governance, in which we must make decisions about a set of complex issues for which we have imperfect information and no perfect solutions, and substitutes one simple question: Is my political adversary repellent? Or, even more to the point: Am I better than them? And the answer we want to give ourselves to that question is almost always yes.

RAGE IS A DANGEROUS EMOTION, not simply because it can be destructive but because it can be so easily satisfied with cheap targets. Like my friend who picks fights online, I’m a veteran. I know people who have been injured or killed overseas. I’ve seen the damage bombs wreak on the bodies of innocent civilians. And, yes, it fills me with rage. But if that rage is to mean anything, it means I cannot distract myself with the illusion of adjudicating past wrongs with artfully phrased put-downs. In a world where we are still at war, the most important question is, What do we do now? There the moral certainty of my rage must be met with humility about the limits of my knowledge.

I’ll never forget the journalist Nir Rosen, who’d become something of a darling of the antiwar left for his well-informed criticisms of U.S. Middle East policy, delivering a blistering attack in front of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations two months after I returned from Iraq. Everything we had done during the 13 months I’d spent overseas, it seemed, was morally corrupt, counterproductive and dangerous. But when then Senator Joe Biden

put the ball in Rosen's court by asking, "Based on what you've said, there's really no hope, we should just get the hell out of there right now, right?"

Rosen was stumped. He admitted that he didn't actually know what should be done, that withdrawal might lead to a spike in sectarian violence and that "it could be Rwanda the day the Americans leave." As a knowledgeable observer of a complex war, Rosen knew enough, despite his first impulse, to know he didn't have the answers.

Civility is a style of argument that implicitly welcomes response. It is a display of respect and tolerance, which make clear that you are engaging in a conversation, not delivering a last word. Unlike contempt, which generally seems less about your targets than about creating an ugly spectacle for your own partisans to enjoy, a civil argument is a plea to all fellow citizens to respond, even if in opposition. It invites the broader body of concerned citizens to fill in the gaps in my knowledge, to correct the flaws in my argument and to continue to deliberate in a rapidly changing world.

Anytime we as a nation act in the world, we are met with a host of second- and third-order consequences, sometimes consequences of greater significance than what we initially set out to fix. The invasion of Iraq, and the rise of jihadism that followed, taught us that. Debates about how to respond to Saddam Hussein had to be followed by debates about the insurgency, the breakdown of governance, the value of international aid vs. military action, the rising influence of Iran, the costs of inaction in Syria, and the escalating refugee crisis. Critics of today's policy may have useful information for tomorrow's problems. Which means we should engage them in a style of discourse that isn't about "destroying" them but about inviting them to respond.

Whether this leads to electoral victories is another question altogether. The civil debates where good-faith participants collectively grope toward better answers to our most pressing challenges are happening in small corners of the public square. Meanwhile, we have a President who came to office flinging insults. Clearly, stoking rage and contempt in the public square can work. It excites us. It gives us courage to act in the face of uncertainty. If instead of hesitating before the other and acknowledging that we do not fully know them or their motives or the extent of their virtues and vices, we reduce them to the least charitable caricature possible. Then we feel on certain ground. But we're never on certain ground. And while abandoning a process of thoughtful deliberation can win you power, what it can never do is give you a hope of using that power wisely.

Klay is the National Book Award-winning author of Redeployment

A MASS CRISIS DEMANDS A MASS RESPONSE

BY DAVID FRENCH

IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT AN OBITUARY GOES VIRAL, but this October a family chose to expose its immense pain for all the world to see, and the story of that pain rocketed around the Internet.

Madelyn Linsenmeir was 30 when she died from her addiction. She first tried OxyContin as a teenager, a moment that "began a relationship with opiates that would dominate the rest of her life." Reading on, you find that she had a son. And when she became a mom, she tried "harder and more relentlessly to stay sober than we have ever seen anyone try at anything." But, her family wrote, "she relapsed and ultimately lost custody of her son." That loss was "unbearable," and her addiction took her to places of "incredible darkness"—a reality that friends and families of addicts know all too well.

Madelyn was one life among the hundreds of thousands (72,000 in 2017 alone) lost to drugs. Along with suicide and alcohol-related deaths, overdoses are fueling a stunning three-year decline in life expectancy in the U.S. These deaths of despair are happening in a time of robust economic growth in arguably the most prosperous and powerful nation in the history of the world, and the decline began even as more Americans had access to health insurance than ever before.

When historians review this period, they'll see two seemingly disconnected cultural realities, existing side by side. Yes, they'll see the astounding death rates and the terrible spread of self-harm. They'll also see something else—a nation divided by fear and anger. America has become a nation that mourns and a nation that hates, and the two are more related than they may appear.

Negative partisanship has infected nearly every corner of political life. By 2017, 81% of Republicans and Democrats viewed the opposing party unfavor-



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ably, with the percentage viewing their opponents “very” unfavorably nearly tripling since 1994.

This fall, a group called More in Common released a comprehensive survey of America’s “hidden tribes,” seeking to understand the sources of American polarization. It concluded that much of America’s political anger was driven by what it called “the wings,” which are flanked by the 8% of Americans who are “progressive activists” and the 6% who are “devoted conservatives.”

The members of the tribes on each end of the spectrum share some common characteristics. They’re disproportionately white, they’re well off, and they’re intensely engaged in politics—roughly twice as likely to list politics as a “hobby” than the average American. They’re motivated. They have means. And they focus many of those resources and much of that energy opposing a political enemy they view as truly dangerous.

Now let’s contrast the polarizing wings with the suffering segments of society. The overdose crisis is harming every social class, but it’s hitting the least educated the hardest. And it affects single men and women disproportionately, with overdose rates skyrocketing for single men without a college degree.

To be clear, I’m not arguing that poor Americans are killing themselves with drugs because of politics. Nor am I arguing that political fights among the relatively affluent are contributing to the crisis. No, the question I raise is this: When their fellow citizens are suffering on such a terrible scale, what are the most engaged, most resourced Americans doing with their lives?

UNLESS YOU’RE AMONG the tiny group of people who exercise actual, substantial political authority, each of us can only have a large influence on a small number of people and a small influence on a large number of people. In other words, we have the potential to transform a life. We have minimal capacity to individually change American politics.

So after we take care of ourselves and our families, where do we expend our excess emotional and financial energy? Is it on the community that we can immediately and consequentially reach? Or is it on a national polity that seems immune to our rage? While some members of our most partisan class do engage in their communities, for millions of Americans, the answer is clear. Politics is the true faith, and political argument is the work that replaces our religious salvation.

Solving our most pressing problems is a titanic undertaking, and they won’t be fixed simply by putting a stop to political squabbling. Indeed, the scale of our challenges contributes to a sense of futility. Americans die by the tens of thousands, and each life is hard to save. This can lead us to throw up our hands and focus on the shouting that seems more

Too many of our citizens spend too much of their energy where they can have the least impact

manageable. Thus too many talented and passionate citizens spend too much energy where they can have the least impact. The nation that hates thus too often ignores the nation that mourns.

The solution isn’t to disengage. “Can’t we all just get along” is a naive call in a nation so profoundly divided by consequential questions. Those for and against access to abortion, for example, should engage each other in the marketplace of ideas, even when doing so can be emotionally fraught. We should debate the Saudi alliance, the Mueller probe and tax rates. There is, however, a matter of priority and proportion that often gets lost, and that can and should demand a sustained policy response to our national malaise. But there’s a problem. The opioid crisis is so deep-seated and complex that it doesn’t fit neatly in the partisan box. Is there any way through that doesn’t require cooperating with the people we’ve grown to hate?

Not long ago I was deeply convicted by an off-hand comment at my church. A woman lamented that she was “too busy for her community.” She was too busy for the people she could influence most. That’s me, I thought. That is my most fundamental flaw. I don’t know my neighbors well, but you can be sure that I know when someone is wrong online. I sometimes struggle to provide even my own friends who’ve battled addiction and alcoholism with sufficient support. Life gets busy, after all, and there are always libs to own. This is the inversion of our priorities from the neighbor whose life I can help change to the nation I can’t save.

This is a moment of profound historic importance. For the blessed, privileged class of Americans, the challenge is clear. A mass cultural crisis demands a mass cultural response. And if loathing for the distant partisan motivates us more than love for the close neighbor, I’d argue that we’re failing that test. That is the hate that will ultimately shame us all.

French is a senior writer for National Review

THE MYTH OF THE MORAL MIDDLE

BY TAYARI JONES

THE FIRST TIME I FOUND MYSELF FACING A political dilemma was in the year 1976; I was 5 years old. My parents were what we used to call “movement people,” veterans of the civil rights movement who leaned toward black nationalism and pan-Africanism. My name, Tayari, was brought back from a family friend’s research trip to Kenya. *Tayari* means “ready” in Kiswahili, an East African lingua franca. My older brother, Patrice Lumumba, was named after the African nationalist and first Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who was assassinated 1961. My folks were not coy about raising us with an agenda.

In 1976, I was very concerned with South African apartheid. Tacked to the wall in our wood-paneled basement was a poster depicting a woman who carried a baby on her back and a rifle strapped across her chest. The caption announced: SHE FIGHTS ON THE SIDE OF AFRICAN FREEDOM—GULF FINANCES THE OTHER. BOYCOTT GULF. I was intrigued with this mother and moved by her efforts to protect her child. Then, in June of that year, Soweto happened. An estimated 20,000 black South African students staged a demonstration, and they were gunned down by the police. Reports said the number killed was somewhere in the neighborhood of 23, but my father and his friends insisted that the number had to be many times that. In my understanding of the world then, I put the blame squarely on Gulf gas.

Later that summer, I received an invitation to go to the zoo from a little girl I liked very much. To get ready for the outing, I put on my zoo clothes: a terry romper and sandals. The other child’s mother picked me up and buckled us in the back seat. I was vibrating with excitement. The Atlanta zoo was home to a giant gorilla, Willie B., who was a local celebrity. I was chattering away and wondering if we would be allowed to pet him.

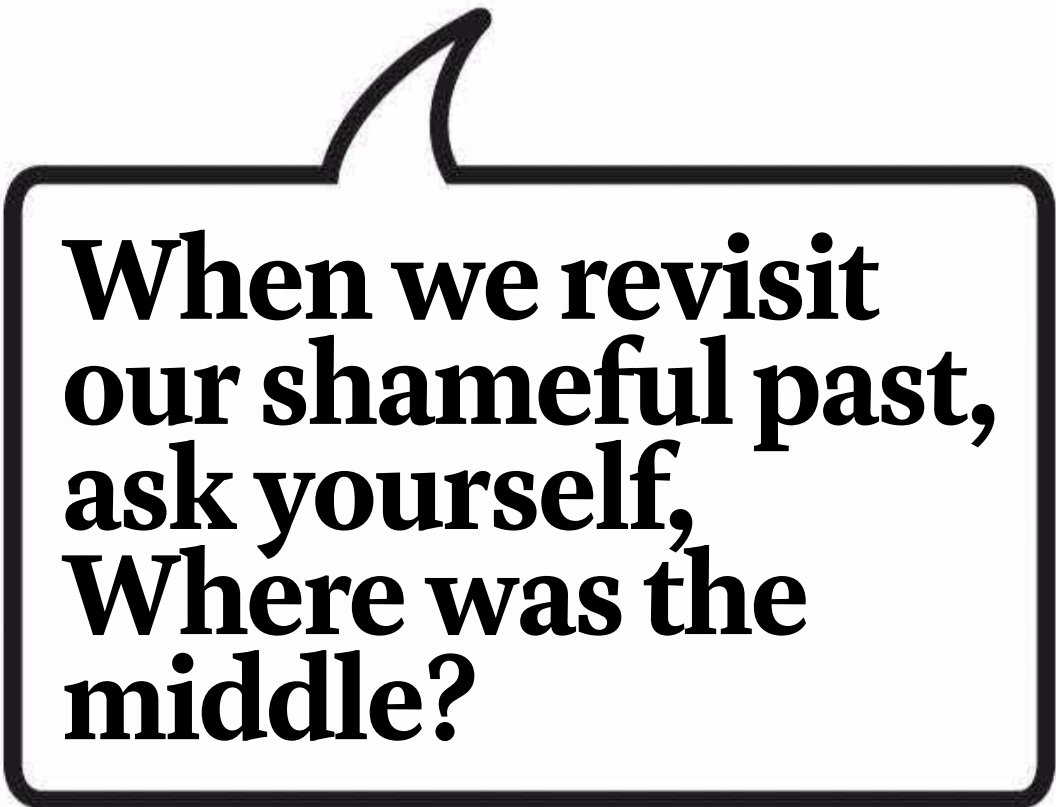
Then my friend’s mother pulled into a gas station. I looked up and saw the Gulf gas logo. At first I assumed that she didn’t know about apartheid, that she had never seen the famous photo of little Hector Pieteron shot dead and carried by an 18-year-old boy. So I explained the situation, and I explained that Gulf gas supported apartheid. “They kill children,” I added.

My friend’s mother was not moved. “Gulf gas is around 60¢ a gallon,” she said, screwing off the gas cap.

As she pumped the gas, I watched the numbers on the dial spin and imagined army tanks and soldiers plowing into a crowd of kids. There was only one response. I got out of the car, refusing to ride in a vehicle fueled by Gulf gas. I crossed my arms over my chest and cried. I felt frustrated that she wasn’t swayed by my reasoning, and I knew that some adults didn’t really listen to kids. But more than that, I was sorry that I wasn’t doing anything to save the children of South Africa.

I RECALL THIS EXPERIENCE NOW, over 40 years later, as we are in a political moment where we find ourselves on opposite sides of what feels like an unbreachable gulf. I find myself annoyed by the hand-wringing about how we need to find common ground. People ask how might we “meet in the middle,” as though this represents a safe, neutral and civilized space. This American fetishization of the moral middle is a misguided and dangerous cultural impulse.

The middle is a point equidistant from two poles. That’s it. There is nothing inherently virtuous about being neither here nor there. Buried in this is a false equivalency of ideas, what you might call the “good people on both sides” phenomenon. When we revisit our shameful past, ask yourself, Where was the middle? Rather than chattel slavery, perhaps we could agree on a nice program of indentured servitude? Instead of subjecting Japanese-American citizens to indefinite detention during WW II, what if we had agreed to give them actual sentences and perhaps provided a receipt for them to reclaim their things when they were released? What is halfway between moral and immoral?



When we revisit our shameful past, ask yourself, Where was the middle?

The search for the middle is rooted in conflict avoidance and denial. For many Americans it is painful to understand that there are citizens of our community who are deeply racist, sexist, homophobic and xenophobic. Certainly, they reason, this current moment is somehow a complicated misunderstanding. Perhaps there is some way to look at this—a view from the middle—that would allow us to communicate and realize that our national identity is the tie that will bind us comfortably, and with a bow. The headlines that lament a “divided” America suggest that the fact that we can’t all get along is more significant than the issues over which we are sparring.

LET US RETURN TO ME, as a 5-year-old.

I identified with the murdered schoolchildren of Soweto because I was a schoolchild. This was more salient to me than the fact that I was black and they were black. I felt personally invested in the safety of kids in schools. If they could be gunned down, how could I be safe? There was no middle ground between me and the woman pumping the gas. She was looking to her pocket-book. And who am I to say what difference a few dollars might have made in her life? But all I knew was that children were being killed in South Africa.

Now I understand that my experience at a public school was literally an ocean away from the brave children of Soweto. However, my empathy with them was complete. Many people understand politics as merely a matter of rhetoric and ideas. Some people will experience wars only in news snippets, while the poor and working class that make up most of our volunteer army will wage war, and still others far and not so far away will have war waged upon them. For the people directly affected, the culture war is a real war too. They know there is no safety in the in-between. The romance of the middle can exist when one’s empathy is aligned with the people expressing opinions on policy or culture rather than with those who will be affected by these policies or cultural norms. Buried in this argument, whether we realize it or not, is the fact that these policies change people’s lives.

As Americans, we are at a crossroads. We have to decide what is central to our identity: Is the importance of our performance of national unity more significant than our core values? Is it more meaningful that we understand why some of us support the separation of children from their parents, or is it more crucial that we support the reunification of these families? Is it more essential that we comprehend the motives of white nationalists, or is it more urgent that

For the people directly affected, the culture war is a real war too

we prevent them from terrorizing communities of color and those who oppose racism? Should we agree to disagree about the murder and dismemberment of a journalist? Should we celebrate our tolerance and civility as we stanch the wounds of the world and the climate with a poultice of national unity?

Back to the gas station on that summer day. My father was summoned to come and collect me. He picked me up, and I buried my face in his neck and sobbed. He told me to thank my friend and her mother for the invitation. I blubbered the words with quivering lips. But he didn’t tell me to say I was sorry. My father was then, as he is now, a man of great civility, but he is also a man with a steady moral compass.

On the drive home, I cried all the way. My zoo clothes were ruined, and I was pretty sure that my little friend would never invite me out again. To soothe me, my father took me out for an ice cream cone, but I couldn’t bear to eat it. As it melted in sticky rivulets, my father simply said, “I’m proud of you, Tayari.”

At the time, I took no comfort in his approval. But lessons of that day are more urgent to me now. Today my more nuanced understanding of the world has underscored what I understood at the gas station. Compromise is not valuable in its own right, and justice seldom dwells in the middle.

*Jones is the author of the novels *An American Marriage*, *Silver Sparrow* and *The Untelling*, and a professor at Emory University*

WE CAN'T LEARN IF WE DON'T LISTEN

BY MARGARET HOOVER

PARTISANSHIP IS NOTHING NEW. I GREW UP IN A household where appliances that broke had “gone Democrat” on us. My family came by it honestly. Hoovers didn’t like Democrats because of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s libelous partisan attacks on my great-grandfather Herbert Hoover, tethering him to the Great Depression. This personalization of hard times transformed the humanitarian hero of World War I into a villain of economic depravity. That reputation stuck for at least 70 years. The bitterness of the battles between conservatives and the Clintons and Obamas seem tame by comparison.

Our media have always been partisan too. After all, Philip Freneau’s *National Gazette*, at the behest of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, attacked the Administration of the first American President, George Washington. Most newspapers in the 19th century were explicitly, even rancorously partisan.

But something has changed in American today. There is anger and hate and vitriol everywhere we look, with people isolated in their partisan echo chambers. The good news is that America as a whole isn’t as deeply polarized as we may seem. It’s a problem only for the most politically engaged of us. And those who make a hobby of their hyper-partisanship make up an even smaller number.

Call it the new 1%. Consider that the top-rated cable-news program on Fox News’ prime time receives 3 million viewers on a good night. In a country of 325 million, those most engaged with right-wing partisan media are just shy of 1% of the country’s population.

But they’re a powerful 1%, as Republican Senator Ben Sasse of Nebraska learned when his political base saw Sean Hannity endorse him in 2014 and then retract that endorsement when he criticized President Trump three years later.

The partisan news allows this small portion of the electorate to have disproportionate influence on members of Congress, pulling them further toward the right or left. Few people in this group are listening to anything outside their cocoon of comfortable information.

That’s what spurred Jeanne Safer, a psychotherapist and couples’ counselor, to start a podcast, *I Love You, but I Hate Your Politics*. Safer has plenty of experience with mixed-marriage political divides—a liberal New Yorker, she’s married to longtime *National Review* editor Richard Brookhiser. In her view, the solution is not just to talk but to listen, remembering that the love uniting us

should be bigger than the opinions dividing us. Or take the example of Ken Stern, the former CEO of NPR who wrote a book, *Republican Like Me*, that is a thoughtful tale about transcending political divides by getting outside our bubbles.

THE ANSWER in both examples is that listening takes a certain skill. The key, as I’ve also learned from my mixed political marriage, is listening with a generous assumption that the other’s views are informed by good intentions. Too many of our conversations in the media hinge on conflict delivered in three-second sound bites. To function as a democracy we are going to need to listen in a spirit that presumes our political opponents are engaged in civic debate for the same reasons we are—they care about the country, their communities, their families and their neighbors.

The other requirement for effective listening is time. To effectively debate ideas and discuss complicated issues takes time. It’s as simple as that. The emerging popularity of long-form content—from podcasts to Oxford-style debates like Intelligence Squared—reveals that giving ideas time to air, to be developed, defended and challenged is key. The goal isn’t to avoid contention. Some of the most iconic moments in American history, from the Constitutional Convention to the Lincoln-Douglas debates, revolved around polarizing arguments that went to the heart of who we are as a nation. But they also took time. If three-hour Lincoln-Douglas-style debates are far-fetched for our news cycle, maybe it’s worth reconsidering, given how little the three-second sound bite has done for us.

Giving our fellow citizens time to truly engage in a constructive contest of ideas, while assuming best intentions, will take us a long way to mending our hyperpartisan media and politics.

Hoover is the host of Firing Line on PBS



Too many of our conversations in the media hinge on conflict delivered in three-second sound bites

WHAT NOVELS CAN TEACH US

BY TOMMY ORANGE

DURING MY BOOK TOUR THIS SUMMER, I WAS asked more questions about my life and Native people than I'd ever thought possible. Most were thoughtful, but occasionally I got questions so ignorant, they were offensive. A white woman asked me whether if she thinks she was a Native American in a past life, is it O.K. to practice our ceremonies? I told the woman no, and said Native ceremonies come from Native experience and are there for us to heal, to understand Native experience. I saw her after the reading, and it seemed she wanted to talk, but she didn't want to talk enough to wait more than five minutes for me to finish my conversation.

Ignorant questions are frustrating to people of color because in movies as well as in literature, the white male is the default representation. This country has been ruled by white men and made to benefit white people above all else since its inception. It is deeply damaging to the psyches of oppressed communities who suffer because of this history to hear lies about what this country means and has meant. It's not even agreed upon that this country's origins are steeped in slave labor, genocidal bloodshed and the taking of land from a people, even though these are facts most if not all historians would agree are facts. The onus is always on us, we the oppressed, to challenge a system that wants to conserve its traditions and traditional values. We come to understand that if we want to be included in the American conversation, we have to work twice as hard while being told that we're lazy, or that the government gives us money, and then told that we're angry if we bring up the problem of racism in public spaces or when it doesn't feel like the right time. So we keep putting off these conversations, or we're having them on the Internet, where it's too easy to be anonymous and therefore cruel and selfish. It's like car drivers behaving dangerously on the road, simply because they're hidden behind metal, glass and distance. In our more personal online spaces we fill our feeds exclusively with people we agree with. If there is conflict below a post or tweet it never feels like a conversation—only like road rage.

SO IF WE CAN'T SEEM TO FIND ways to talk in person, or online, when and where and how do we talk? I think a novel is a kind of conversation. Both the writer and the reader bring their experience to

Both the
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the reader
bring their
experience
to the page

the page. The reader's experiences and ideas can be reshaped, challenged, changed. I know, I'm a writer, so of course I think the answer is books, but I think reading books is a good place to start thinking about and understanding people's stories you aren't familiar with, outside your comfort zone and experience. A novel will ask you to walk in a character's shoes, and this can build empathy. Without empathy we are lost. I tend to read mostly novels and have come to understand the world better through the lens of novels. When someone else's world is different from our own, we see how we are the same. We not only become more empathetic to their experience but we see how we are equal. We also see how much upper-middle-class white male writing has been the only thing taught in schools, the only experience for so long—most of the time anyway. I think institutional change can come by teaching women, teaching writers of color. We will all be better for it. I like that novels ask us without seeming to ask us to think about other people, to understand the many-storied landscape of this country we live and die in—with or without truly knowing or understanding them.

*Orange is the author of the best-selling novel
There There*

THE FIRST STEP WE CAN ALL TAKE

BY NANCY GIBBS

JUST BECAUSE THE LEADING MAN COMMANDS center stage, through all the acts of comedy and tragedy and farce, does not mean he gets to decide how the play turns out. Every year, come November, the audience becomes the actor. Young and old, red and blue—the stage is yours.

The most fateful question in any election cycle is not who's ahead; it's who shows up. In 2014, the midterm mood was so lukewarm that turnout was the lowest in 72 years. But it appears that this year just might be different. Let's hope this is true, but not just because of who could win, control the Hill, approve the next Justice, partner with or police the President. Social scientists charting the health of America's democracy see a series of threats ranging from distrust in institutions to attacks on the press to interference from abroad to deepening polarization at home. There is no easy way to fix this; it's only easy to know where to begin.

Vote because it is the one absolutely necessary step toward any better place. It reminds public servants about the public they serve. It dilutes the power of big donors and narrow interests. It builds civic muscles we need all through the year to serve our neighbors and strengthen our communities. And it confounds the experts who insist on predicting outcomes as though the election were a formality. Voting is an act of faith in the possibility that in a true democracy, anything can happen.

Vote if the voices you hear don't speak for you. "Elections have consequences," Barack Obama and Mitch McConnell have said in defense of their power plays. We shape outcomes only if we provide input. Otherwise, we are wind through a leafless branch, moving nothing at all.

Vote because you refuse to let voting become the privilege of the enraged and engaged. It's fine not to care about politics; these days, it's even healthy. You still get a vote, to remind politicians that they serve both the people who admire them and those who ignore them.


Vote because there are those who may not want you to, who promote laws making it harder for poor people or young people or not-white people to cast a ballot. Nearly 16 million people were struck from voting rolls from 2014 to 2016, reports the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School. From Georgia to North Dakota, activists are fighting in the courts and in the streets over who gets to cast a ballot—battles that both inspire and deter people from showing up at the polls.

Vote to defy those who spread false rumors of active shooters near polling places, who create fake Facebook posts claiming you can vote by text, who distribute flyers listing the wrong date or address for elections and polling places.

Vote as a nod to a time when people were fine if their son married a Republican and their daughter a Democrat.

Vote because democracy would be healthier if races were closer. More than 60% of Americans live in counties that in 2016 were decided by more than 20 points. So why should politicians bother to engage in hard debates or even look for a middle ground? Your vote is not wasted if you are a San Francisco Republican or a Wichita Democrat. Even the reddest and bluest states can swerve; just ask Not-a-Senator Roy Moore, after crimson Alabama elected a Democrat, or Charlie Baker, the popular Republican governor of the socialist republic of Massachusetts.

Vote because our civic culture needs some love right now. "Most people don't care about democracy issues; they care about particular issues, like guns or health care or climate change," observes Archon Fung, a professor of citizenship and self-government at Harvard Kennedy School of Government. But that could change as people are



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growing more concerned about the health of our institutions. “Democracy is being beaten up, by negative advertising, by low turnout, by tribes attacking each other rather than being willing to listen or engage with one another,” Fung warns. “All of that takes chunks out of democracy. And the more chunks we take out, the more fragile democracy becomes. Eventually it may fall apart.”

Vote as a positive act, since our system has become pitilessly negative. If at all possible, find someone you can vote *for*. Our politics can’t reflect the best in us if it is powered mainly by the worst—our fears, our resentments, our fevered tribal furies. If you only vote against people you can’t stand, those you elect feel less accountable and have less reason to listen or learn.

LET’S VOTE because if by some miracle everyone voted, so much might be different. Roughly 40% of voting-age Americans cast a ballot in the 2014 midterms—the lowest percentage since 1942. The 55.7% participation rate in 2016 puts us 26th among 32 developed nations in voter turnout. But involvement varies widely: in 2014, in California alone, turnout ranged from 22.6% in Imperial County in the south to 65.0% in Sierra County up north. In 2016, 70% of people over 70 voted nationally vs. only 43% of people under 25.

This is partly because we make voting hard, in 50 states with 50 different systems. But that also means we can experiment with reforms, as individuals, employers and citizens of state governments. Denver decided in 2013 that it would mail all registered voters ballots, which they can send back or drop off at a designated spot. In 2016, 72% of its voters turned out—with increased participation from both Republicans and Democrats. As of this year, 13 states and Washington, D.C., have automatic voter-registration laws, meaning that when people interact with the government (from getting a driver’s license to receiving food assistance), they are automatically registered. Oregon, the only state with data on the impact of these measures, instituted such a policy for the 2016 election and saw the largest turnout spike of all the states compared with 2012.

Vote because there are fewer excuses. A 2014 Pew survey found that two-thirds of people who didn’t vote said they just didn’t have time. So outdoor-apparel retailer Patagonia will close all its stores and headquarters and give everyone a paid day off so they have time to get to the polls, just as companies like Spotify, Ford and General Motors did in 2016. “No American should have to choose between a paycheck and fulfilling his or her duty as a citizen,” argues Patagonia CEO Rose Marcario. Given the odds against Congress making Election Day a national holiday, groups like Vote.org are



**Vote if the
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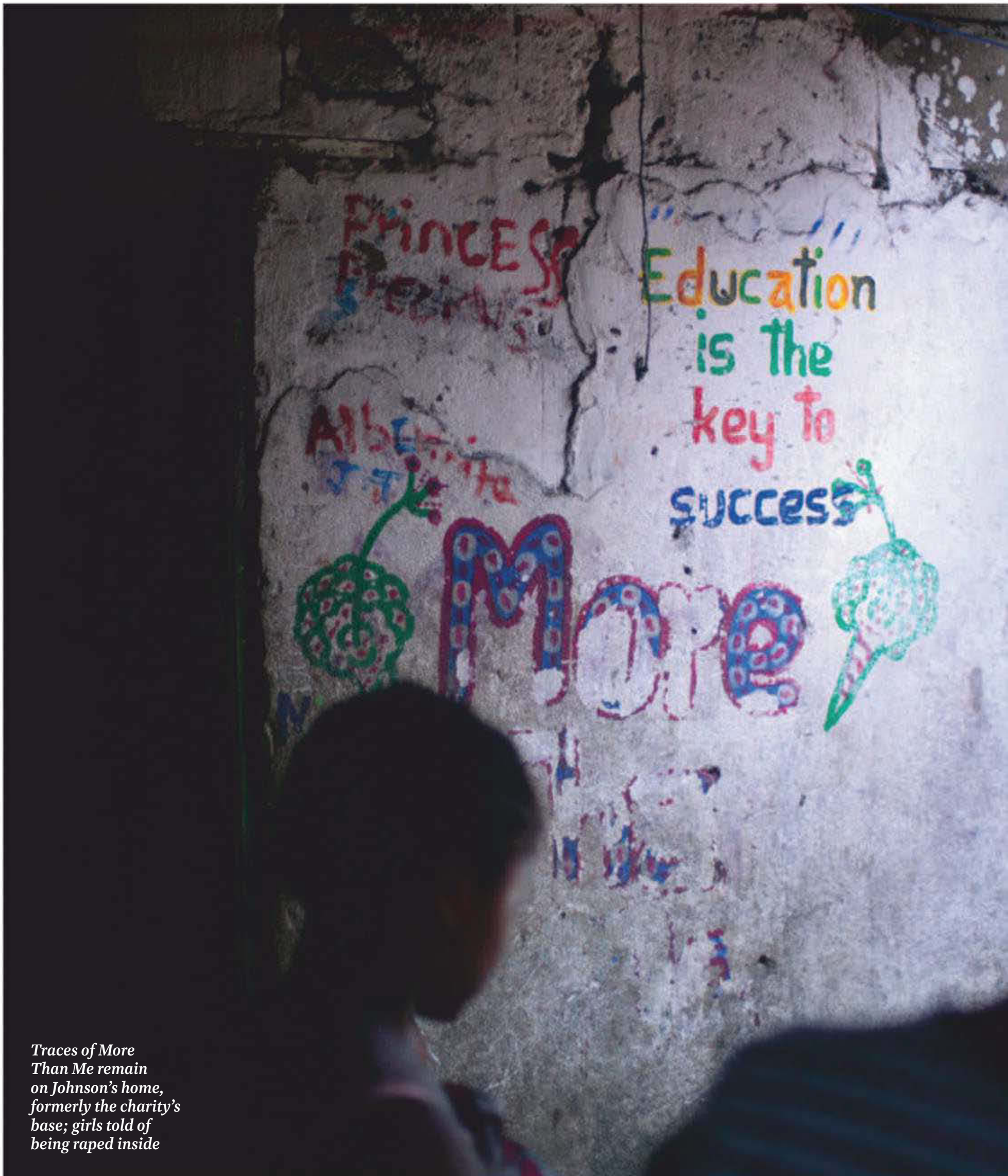
lobbying companies to give workers at least two hours’ paid time off for a trip to the polls. Companies from Pinterest to Walmart to Tyson have signed on.

Vote because this is not the first time our politics has gotten ugly, though the ugly is now everywhere. We are in one another’s faces and feeds 24/7, in ways not possible 10 years ago. And we are served, though that hardly feels like the right verb, by a President with a unique indifference to uniting the country and a rare passion for jabbing his finger into our wounds. It is easier to incite than inspire; it is also effective, or he might not be the President, and Brett Kavanaugh might not be a Justice. Conflict drives engagement, which captures attention, the currency of our age.

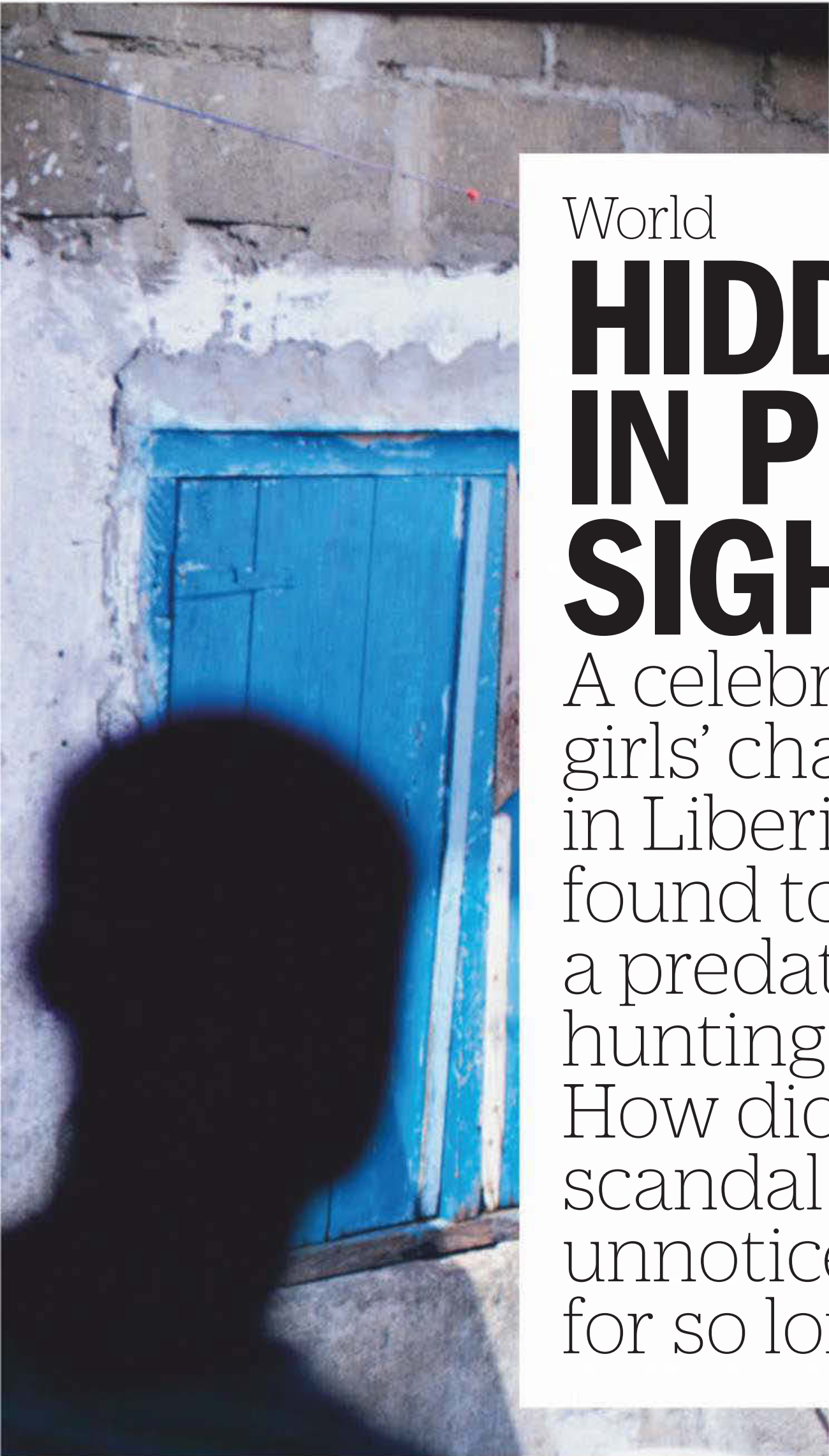
We get what we reward. So vote as an act of common commitment to the common good. At a time when Americans disagree on so much, we can agree that the four-alarm fire of our political scene is horrific. Think of your Facebook friends whose politics you’re sick of or whose politics you share; vote because it’s a better response than a comment.

Let’s vote like it matters. Because then it will.

Gibbs, a former editor-in-chief of TIME, is the Edward R. Murrow visiting professor at Harvard Kennedy School of Government



Traces of More Than Me remain on Johnson's home, formerly the charity's base; girls told of being raped inside



World

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

A celebrated girls' charity in Liberia was found to be a predator's hunting ground. How did the scandal go unnoticed for so long?



JUNE 17, 2014, FOUND KATIE MEYLER IN New York City, talking to the world's richest men about her work with some of its poorest girls. On little more than a sense of purpose and fit of inspiration, the New Jersey native founded More Than Me, a nonprofit to help girls off the streets of Monrovia, Liberia, by paying for their school. Eventually, it would open its own academy and earn a contract from the Liberian government to operate 19 schools across the country.

Meyler had corralled \$1 million in funding through her expert use of social media, but she was no less impressive in person. After her presentation at the Forbes 400 Summit on Philanthropy that June day, Berkshire Hathaway chairman Warren Buffett, the most admired investor in America, found her backstage, fell on bended knee and proposed marriage.

"He said no pre-nup too, lol," Meyler later wrote on Twitter, linking to an Instagram post where the message was not entirely light: "Honestly need to slap myself sometimes bc this More Than Me journey feels like a dream and sometimes a nightmare but it's not, and I'll use every single

Girls testified to being assaulted inside the charity's first school, in downtown Monrovia

thing that I can to make sure to do the most amount of good."

There was indeed a nightmare, though. One day earlier and 4,500 miles away, the man Meyler had described as the charity's co-founder had been arrested. The charge was raping the girls in their care. Ten students would testify against Macintosh Johnson, though the number of suspected victims approached 30.

They were girls who wanted the scholarships Meyler was offering. She had made a sexual predator the gatekeeper for a program that existed to help girls escape sexual exploitation. In a Liberian courtroom, the victims would describe being raped in the More Than Me school's bathroom, library, guesthouse, classroom and car.

The victims said Johnson enforced silence about the rapes by threatening the loss of their scholarship. One of the girls would later tell a reporter that she and her friends nonetheless considered reporting their rapes, but feared Meyler would not

take action because she was so close to Johnson; in fact, Meyler and Johnson had been intimate.

"I don't think that even if I came to tell her, she would come to believe me," the girl told Finlay Young, a reporter for ProPublica, a nonprofit investigative newsroom based in New York.

Young spent a year investigating the assaults and the actions of Meyler and her charity. The resulting article was published jointly online on Oct. 11 by ProPublica and TIME. It included indications that Meyler had overlooked or ignored evidence of Johnson's appetite for sex with young girls, and that the charity had failed to formally investigate how the assaults could have occurred, working instead to dissociate itself from Johnson, its first and most prominent employee.

No international staff from More Than Me testified at Johnson's trial, which ended in a hung jury. And after he died in custody, with AIDS, the charity told Young it made no attempt either to establish the cause of death, or to determine the HIV status of the general student population on which he had preyed.



The charity official who alerted police to the rapes, Michelle Spada, told Young that she felt initial intense pressure from a member of the More Than Me board not to rush to the authorities. Spada said that when she argued the case, the board member, Skip Borghese, told her, “Get off your f-cking soapbox.” Through a lawyer, Borghese denied the statement.

Young’s report had immediate impact. Within days of publication, the More Than Me board announced that private HIV tests would be given to students of its Monrovia academy. The board also announced not one but two investigations: the first would be carried out by “a law firm with education and investigatory expertise to conduct an in-depth, independent audit of our organization,” the board said in a statement. The second probe would be conducted by the charity’s Liberian advisory board.

Meyler, who had maintained the only mistake was hiring Johnson, was asked to take a leave of absence while the new inquiries went forward. Borghese, who had become board chairman, resigned.

“We are deeply, profoundly sorry.

^

Liberians marched on Oct. 18 to demand justice for victims and more aggressive oversight of aid agencies and education

To all the girls who were raped by Macintosh Johnson in 2014 and before: we failed you,” read a statement posted on the More Than Me website on Oct. 12. “We gave Johnson power that he exploited to abuse children. Those power dynamics broke staff ability to report the abuse to our leadership immediately. Our leadership should have recognized the signs earlier . . .”

A third investigation was launched by the government of Liberia, which after 2015 placed More Than Me in charge of 18 other schools in the country. Street protests in the capital demanded the charity be disbanded there. They also asked another, more probing question: How did the scandal go unnoticed for three years?

PART OF THE ANSWER may lie in other concerns pressed by the Liberian protesters: the extent to which poor countries rely on international groups, from large multinational aid agencies to

smaller, mission-driven charities, and the leeway those organizations are given by national governments.

Another part of the answer is far more specific to the idiosyncratic, personal nature of Meyler’s project and the man who was once at the heart of it. Macintosh Johnson was a charismatic charmer with a 10th-grade education and a high profile in West Point, the sprawling shantytown where he lived. Young wrote that he spoke of his youth as a child soldier, and had run a vigilante crew that enforced rough justice where police were scarce. He also volunteered for a charity, and displayed a talent as a sort of interlocutor between well-intentioned Westerners and his Monrovia neighborhood; at one point, he showed Bono around.

Meyler gravitated to Johnson. She called him the “Jesus of West Point,” and it became his handle on Instagram. “There’s something different about Macintosh and it’s obvious,” Meyler wrote on Facebook in August 2010. “People look up to him.” He was made the primary local contact for More Than Me, and held the power to change lives and generate wealth—

especially for the 10 months of the year that Meyler's Facebook posts showed she was raising money in the U.S.

But the most obvious explanation for the scandal drawing so little attention was yet another coincidence of timing. During that the same week that the Oracle of Omaha dropped to his knee and Johnson was taken into custody, a third event occurred: Ebola erupted in Monrovia.

The epidemic not only overshadowed all other news from West Africa for the remainder of the calendar year, it also made Meyler more famous than ever, and in a new context. The epicenter of the Ebola catastrophe in Liberia's capital was West Point, and Meyler threw herself and the charity into saving lives there. Over the course of the outbreak, Liberians on More Than Me's payroll transported, at substantial personal risk to their own health, 262 suspected Ebola patients to treatment and visited almost 3,000 homes to check on residents' welfare, by the charity's count.

Meyler was in the middle of it, often with visiting journalists in tow. A flurry of international attention followed, and in December, Meyler was included among the individuals TIME named its 2014 Person of the Year for their courageous fight against the epidemic. More Than Me's budget for the next fiscal year more than tripled.

"I won't get sick," she wrote in a message to her sister during the epidemic that was reported by Young. "If I did, though, it would be worth it. No one else here is doing this. Showing love n dignity in death."

INTERNATIONAL AID ORGANIZATIONS working in poor countries do lots of important and admirable work, but at ground level their efforts are often obscured by their structures: the offices, the walled compounds, the lumbering white SUVs. Their bulky bureaucracies are partly to accommodate the foreigners who rotate through on short-term contracts, but also to enforce standards put in place to protect both the organizations and the people they aim to help.

They are not Mother Teresa in what was once Calcutta, or Albert Schweitzer in what is now Gabon. There's something compelling about one person trying to make a difference—especially in the age of social media. After the Ebola outbreak, when major aid agencies were still in the

planning stages, Meyler arrived in Monrovia with a suitcase full of medical supplies, and chronicled it all on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

Meyler's school project had taken off when she won \$1 million by collecting the most votes on Facebook to win the 2012 American Giving Awards sponsored by JPMorgan Chase. She had written on her forehead the name of a Liberian girl she described as selling herself to buy drinking water. "I am Abigail" went viral.

With the money, Meyler went from offering scholarships to existing schools to starting one of her own: the More Than Me academy opened in 2013 on Meyler's birthday—aptly enough, for an enterprise that looked like an institution, but in crucial ways remained a personal project. Young's reporting detailed the risks entailed in that informality: funds unaccounted for, a principal hired with no administrative experience and a board of directors on which no one "had experience running schools or safeguarding vulnerable children." Borghese was an Italian prince who marketed cosmetics on the Home Shopping Network. His wife, Katie Borghese, was a close friend of Meyler's and also on the board.

"Peace Corps volunteers, people who have done one-mission trips somewhere, they're constantly starting organizations like this," says Jennifer N. Brass, an associate professor at Indiana University who studies international aid agencies. "The fact that that one took off is extremely rare."

When it happens, social media tends

After the report, Meyler agreed to take a leave of absence from the charity she founded



to be the accelerator, though it offers no guarantee of results. Brass points to the Kony 2012 video about the Ugandan warlord that racked up 100 million views on YouTube in the space of six days, in the name of raising awareness about his crimes. Six years later, Joseph Kony remains at large, and his militia continues to kidnap children.

Nor are well-established organizations immune to abuse. The head of Oxfam, the British charity that has over 10,000 workers in more than 90 countries, announced he would step down in May after its workers in Haiti were accused of exploiting victims of the 2010 earthquake. "I don't think this is necessarily an African story," says Brass. "Anywhere where you have massive power differentials, you have the opportunity for abuse."

When something terrible does emerge, crisis-management experts advise a strategy of radical candor: assess the damage, publicize the results, vow to do better. But when Johnson was charged, More Than Me went another way entirely. The charity hired a public-relations expert who had worked for Mitt Romney and Condoleezza Rice. A press release was posted on its website mentioning "numerous students reported sexual misconduct" by a "community liaison." The statement noted "the country's epidemic of child rape" and Meyler was quoted diffusing responsibility: "Our girls cannot be victimized a second time by a culture that accepts their rape as standard practice." Blog posts featuring Johnson were deleted, as was the reference to Meyler and Johnson as "founders." Also scrubbed was Johnson's role in recruiting girls.

But the charity's name remained daubed in paint on Johnson's house, inside of which several girls said they were instructed to wait, looking at pornography on his phone before being raped.

Formal background checks may not always be practical on the ground in sub-Saharan Africa, but Young found indications that Johnson would not have passed one. The mother of his children said she had caught him molesting girls several times, and said she left him after he impregnated a 14-year-old in their care. She said she was less direct when Meyler asked about Johnson, in a conversation in 2011, the year Meyler and Johnson were intimate. Describing the exchange to



Young, Meyler said, “Something about the way she said it made me uncomfortable, but it was never explicit.”

Meyler had also mentioned the exchange to Spada, the charity officer who reported Johnson. In her statement to police, Spada said Meyler told her she “took the accusation as a rumor.” To Young, Spada added that she clearly recalled Meyler adding, “It wouldn’t surprise me.”

Meyler apparently did confront Johnson—on camera, no less. Holden Warren, an independent filmmaker impressed by Meyler’s selflessness, was making a documentary about her and More Than Me. He was shooting when Meyler questioned Johnson about rumors he was “into small girls.” But Warren declined to share the footage of the encounter, telling Young in an email that Meyler “didn’t see how it would be in her interest.”

RELEASE OF THE FOOTAGE was among the page-long list of demands compiled by the Liberia Feminist Forum after the story was published. They also include

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The Oct. 18 demonstrations in Monrovia included calls to address the wider problem of sexual assault in Liberian society

re-assignment to another operator of the 19 schools run by More Than Me. On Oct. 23, More Than Me students assembled in a counterdemonstration, hoisting signs reading **KATIE IS INNOCENT** and forwarding the argument Meyler had made before the story’s publication: that the damage done does not erase the good works performed.

But many Liberians had focused their outrage beyond one agency, to take in broader issues of governance and their society. Among the Forum’s demands was dismissal of the official who led the prosecution of Johnson.

More than 500 people marched through the muggy streets of the capital for more than hour on Oct. 18, singing, blowing whistles and holding handmade signs bearing messages including **STOP ABUSING US** and **SORRY IS NEVER ENOUGH** and **FIX THE SYSTEM**. At the

final stop, Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor came out to the street. She began by affirming the message of President George Weah, the former national-team soccer star who the previous day had called himself “Feminist-in-Chief.” Weah withheld judgment of More Than Me pending the government probe, but called the scandal “indicative of an undeniable increase in the incidence of sexual violence in Liberia.”

When Howard Taylor spoke, it was with her particular authority as the former wife of Charles Taylor, who before becoming President of Liberia was a warlord notorious for maintaining a militia that included a cadre of child soldiers. Taylor is now in prison for war crimes committed during the civil wars that kept Liberia in a state of lawlessness for years, and made sexual assault a weapon of war, a practice that is still tolerated in much of Liberian society.

“Keep in mind,” the Vice President said, “More Than Me is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many issues in our homes, in our families . . .” —KARL VICK

World

when

WAR

comes

HOME

IN A REMOTE AFGHAN VILLAGE, AN EXPLOSION CHANGED ONE FAMILY FOREVER

Photographs and text by Andrew Quilty

Shafiqullah, the eldest of the injured children, at home on June 25. "Since the accident," one cousin said, he is "even more driven to study."





Hamisha Gul tries to comfort his son Mangal, at left, after the painful daily cleaning process at Nangarhar Regional Hospital on May 26; at right, a nurse prepares to do the same for Shafiqullah as the boys' uncle sits by; Abdul Rashid, center, waits his turn.





Mangal, whose right leg was amputated below the knee, on May 31, sees beyond the hospital walls for the first time since arriving more than a month earlier



THE IBRAHIM KHIL FAMILY SPENT THE NIGHT OF April 28 unable to sleep as bullets cracked and rockets exploded outside their home. Hamisha Gul, the patriarch, feared his extended family of 24 wouldn't survive until morning. But the children weren't afraid. They were used to the sounds of war here in the tiny village of Saed Tuba, in eastern Afghanistan.

By 6 a.m., the fighting had stopped and some of the children began walking through the dry wheat fields to school. One came across a sleek, dull-green object, about the size of a police baton, picked it up and turned for home to show the others.

Accounts of what happened next vary from child to child, but after nearly a dozen children had gathered, the rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) fell to the ground. Hamisha Gul, 60, heard the explosion over the noise of his tractor, half a mile away. When he turned, a cloud of dust billowed outside his home.

After 17 years of war between the Taliban and Afghan forces backed by foreign troops, the violence keeps up a steady rhythm. Militants targeting the legislative elections held on Oct. 20 and Oct. 21 killed



dozens. Three days earlier, the entire leadership of Kandahar was almost wiped out in an assassination attack that came close to killing the U.S. commander of the war, General Austin S. Miller.

A heavy toll has been paid by civilians in this years-long conflict. Many have been killed by IEDs, suicide bombers or airstrikes. But among the more than 8,050 noncombatants killed or injured so far this year according to the U.N., a total of 337 have been killed by unexploded ordnance left behind on the battlefield. Of these, 90% were children.

These included the members of the Ibrahim Khil family surrounding that RPG. Shrapnel tore through their flesh, from toes to thighs. Five would lose portions of a leg, and two would lose most of both. Three, and one adult who was with them, would lose their lives before reaching the hospital. Which side was responsible, soldier or insurgent, Hamisha Gul couldn't be certain. To the victims, it made no difference at all.

IN 2008, Hamisha Gul moved his family from a neighboring district controlled by the Taliban so his

children could receive an education. "Boys as young as 8 years old were carrying weapons and wearing bandoliers of bullets," he said, outside his home in May. He feared that if they didn't leave, his boys would fall under the sway of the fighters.

By 2014, the war had come home. Their village in Surkh Rod district had become a no-man's-land between a government-controlled highway and the Taliban's Black Mountain, so named because snow never falls there. That year, international forces handed responsibility for the country's security back to the Afghan government, and the Taliban started attacking Afghan soldiers stationed on the highway. Local elders pleaded with both sides to avoid battles near their homes. The fighters agreed, but nothing changed.

On April 29, the seven children who survived the RPG explosion—all from the Ibrahim Khil family—arrived at Nangarhar Regional Hospital in Jalalabad at 7 a.m. "Muscles and tendons were hanging from their legs," said Bilal Sayed Miakhil, the hospital's specialist orthopedic surgeon. "Their injuries were

Abdul Rashid, one of the last boys to be discharged, and Rabia rest at home. Many legs not lost in the explosion likely were broken



From left: Bashir, Mangal, Marwa, Abdul Rashid (in wheelchair), Aman and, in the distance, Rabia are helped by their cousins on July 23 to a nearby house, where they attended school while recovering





Abdul Rashid watches a patient practice with a prosthetic leg at the orthopedic center in Jalalabad on June 27



The seven children in their makeshift home classroom on Oct. 11. From left: Aman, Mangal, Rabia, Marwa, Shafiqullah (at rear), Abdul Rashid (in wheelchair) and his twin Bashir. Abdul Rashid, who aggravated one of his wounds while wrestling with his brothers, was the only one yet fitted for prostheses. Aman was waiting for his to be repaired, after breaking it playing

so extensive that amputations were needed just to stop the bleeding.”

Marwa, 4, whose mother and twin sister were killed in the blast, lost part of her right leg. So did Aman, 5; Rabia, 7; and Mangal, now 8. Bashir, now 9, lost his left leg below the knee. His twin brother, Abdul Rashid, lost both legs below the knee. Shafiqullah, 12, had both legs amputated above the knee. Four of the boys were Hamisha Gul’s own sons. One, Aman, was his grandson. For a month, Hamisha Gul slept on the floor of a ward where his boys were being treated. His granddaughter and niece stayed upstairs in the women’s ward. Each morning the nurse would come to clean and re-bandage their wounds. Hamisha Gul would go from bed to bed trying to comfort them as their raw wounds were rinsed and as surgical drains were pulled from between the sutures. Their cries echoed around the room.

The days passed slowly as their wounds began to heal. Hamisha Gul would bring toys from the bazaar for the boys to play with on their hospital beds. Shafiqullah, eager not to fall behind at school, would study. Eventually it was time to leave. Abdul Rashid, one of the last to be discharged, called home on May 31 to speak to his twin brother. “We are coming now,” he said, “and we are coming with happiness.”

After they left the hospital, the extended family would travel by taxi regularly from home to the International Committee of the Red Cross’s orthopedic center in Jalalabad—first, for the injured to learn how to use crutches, and then to be fitted with prostheses. By August, the five single amputees

had been fitted with prosthetic limbs. Each came with a new pair of sneakers. After their first day of training, Bashir cried as he handed his new leg back so technicians could adjust it before his next visit. Alberto Cairo, head of the ICRC’s orthopedic program, says it was “very exceptional” to see so many injured from one family. All seven have since had prostheses fitted, some by a separate NGO.

Learning to walk again had a positive effect on the children. “Since they have their legs, they are much more happy,” Hamisha Gul said in August. “They are eating more than they have in a long time.” Their recovery continued into the fall, and settled into a routine. They studied together in the mornings and played outside in the afternoons. The children realize now their education is more important than ever. “There is certain work we can’t do now,” Abdul Rashid told TIME. Hamisha Gul put it more bluntly: “Without education, they are nothing.”

Soon after the incident, village elders told the Taliban what happened. They said fighting around their homes has since decreased, but it hasn’t stopped completely. Two months after the explosion that injured the Ibrahim Khil family, an army explosive ordnance disposal team destroyed another RPG that fell behind the house. Young neighbors had found it. Before the team departed, Hamisha Gul, who had been watching from a neighboring compound, called for their attention. As he approached them, he stretched out his hand and gingerly presented them with a grenade. He found it while walking home to his family. □





Nation

The Nemesis

Michael
Avenatti
believes the
only way to
beat a bully is
to be one

By Molly Ball
and Alana
Abramson



THE WOMAN APPROACHED MICHAEL Avenatti with obvious purpose. A 79-year-old retired physicist with long blond hair, she wore a blue T-shirt that said AVENATTI IS MY SPIRIT ANIMAL. It was mid-August, and Avenatti had just finished giving a rousing speech at a county Democratic picnic in New Hampshire. As he threw his arm around her and grinned for the umpteenth selfie of the day, she slipped a folded piece of paper into his hand.

Later, as he checked into his luxury hotel near Manchester, Avenatti took the paper out of his pocket and unfolded it. It was a check for \$1,000, made out to “Avenatti for President.” In the memo line, the woman had written, in precise lower-case print: “Our hopes are in your hands.”

This is the effect Michael Avenatti has on many of the Democratic faithful: he thrills them to the core. His presence at the picnic had instantly tripled ticket sales. Pink-hatted students mingled with retirees in SINGLE PAYER NOW tees as the state party chairman, one of the country’s leading Democratic power brokers, introduced him as “Donald Trump’s worst nightmare, Michael Avenatti!” to rapturous cheers. And the idea that the 47-year-old lawyer could be the Democratic presidential nominee in 2020 began to appear not entirely unrealistic.

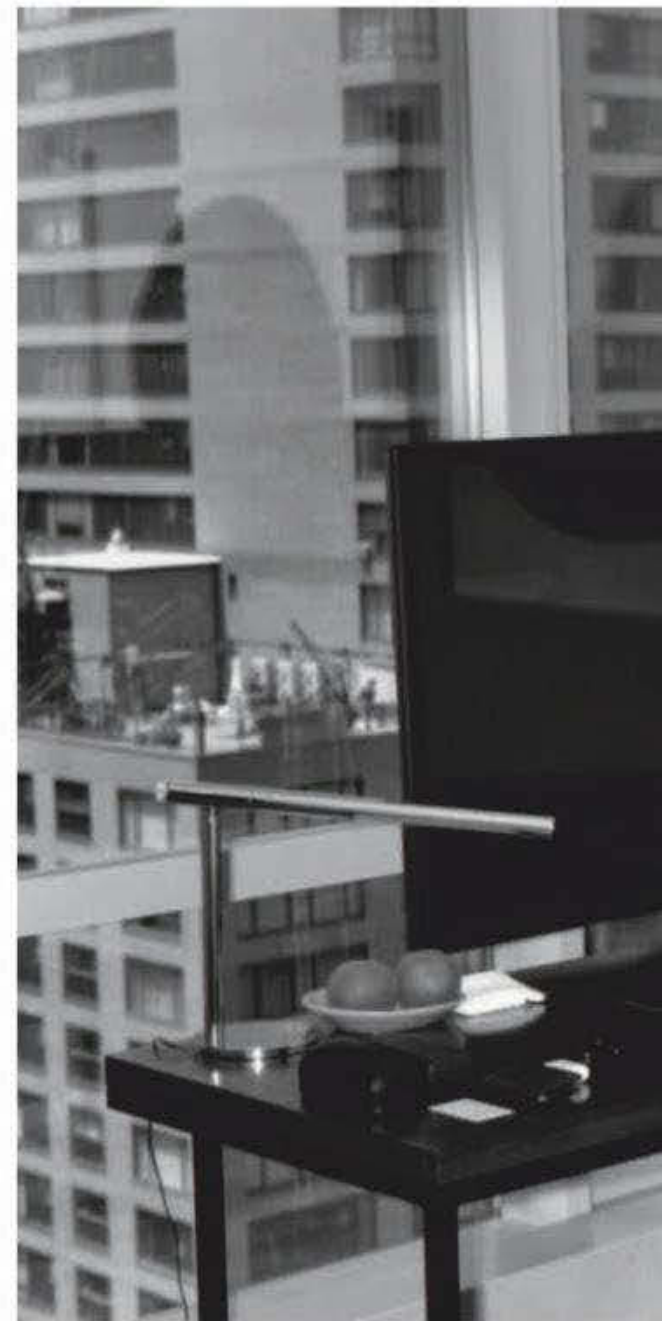
If it suddenly seems like Avenatti is everywhere, that’s because he is. Just a few months ago he was a successful but virtually unknown Los Angeles plaintiff’s lawyer with fewer than 600 Twitter followers—mostly “friends, relatives and opposing counsel,” he says. That was before he met Stormy Daniels, the adult-film actor whom Trump paid \$130,000 days before the 2016 election to keep quiet about a one-night stand she alleges she had with him in 2006. With Avenatti’s help, Daniels’ lawsuit metastasized into a criminal probe of Trump’s attorney Michael Cohen that has produced the first sworn allegations in open court of criminal behavior by the President. Avenatti has exposed Cohen’s multimillion-dollar influence racket, taken up the cases of

dozens of immigrant parents separated from their children at the Mexican border, and jumped into the controversy over Brett Kavanaugh’s nomination to the Supreme Court, producing lurid, uncorroborated allegations from a client, Julie Swetnick, who says Kavanaugh was present at parties in the early 1980s at which teenage girls were gang-raped.

Avenatti’s knack for inserting himself into the liberal crusade of the moment has made him ubiquitous on cable TV. This fall he has become equally visible on the campaign trail, headlining rubber-chicken dinners in 15 states to raise money for Democrats as he explores a run for President. All this has clearly been good for Avenatti, whose Twitter followers now number nearly 900,000 and whose main occupational hazard, he tells TIME, is telling apart the naked pictures sent by political opponents trying to entrap him from those sent by sincere admirers.

But is it good for the Democrats? Does a party that spends its every waking moment deriding Trump as a divisive egomaniac really want to rally behind another pugilistic neophyte? And who is Michael Avenatti, anyway? Even as he fought for Stormy, Swetnick and separated mothers, he has been embroiled in personal and professional disputes, a TIME investigation shows, including IRS probes, long-running lawsuits against him and his firm, and a contentious, expensive divorce. Republicans could tell Democrats a thing or two about what it’s like to let a cocksure but seemingly harmless entertainer throw red meat, collecting lots of checks for the party along the way, only to realize too late that you’ve created a monster you can’t control.

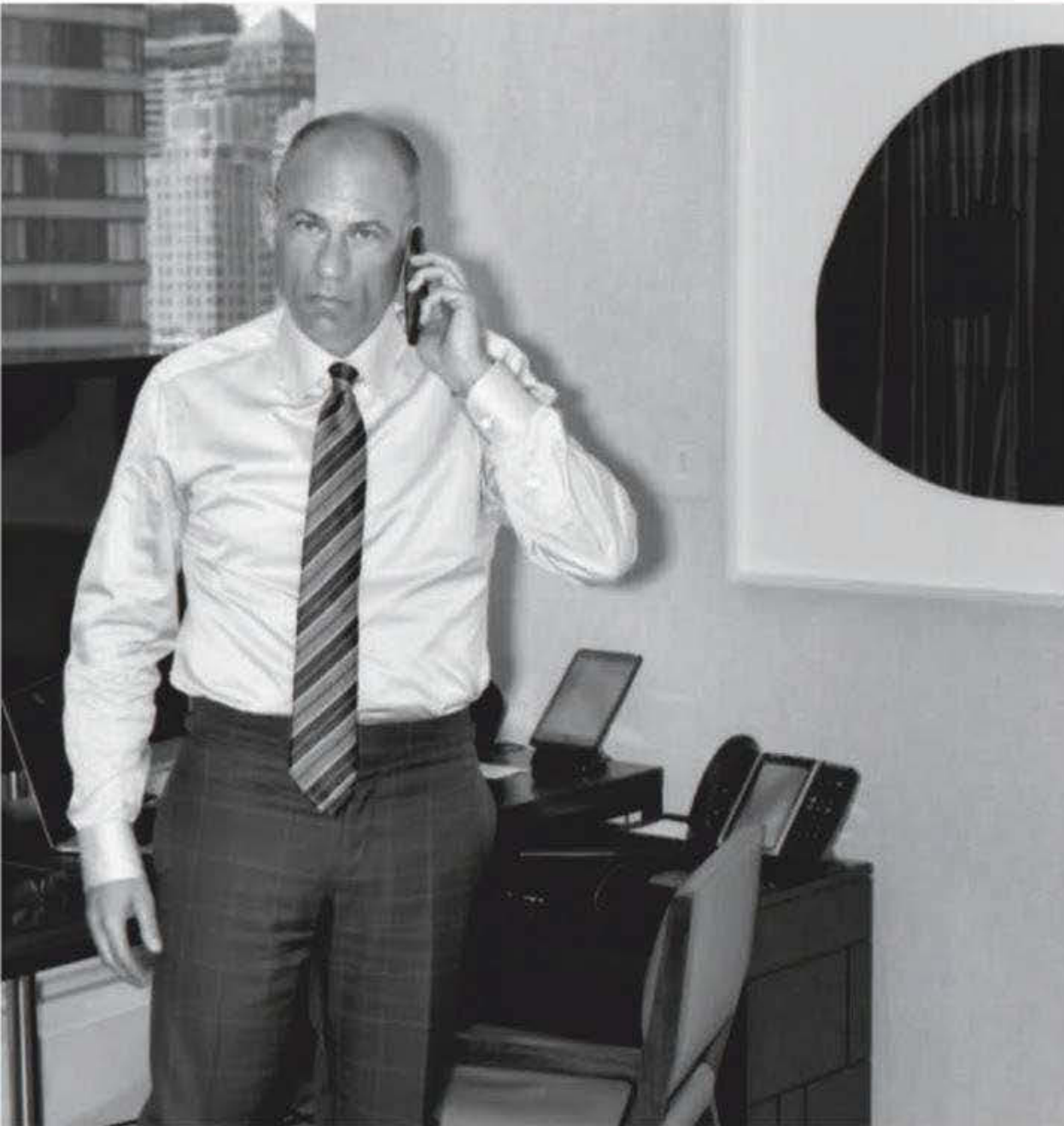
For now, the Democratic establishment sees Avenatti as a sideshow. “There is some market for someone who will punch Trump in the nose,” says President Obama’s former strategist David Axelrod, but he’s “a long way from being a truly viable candidate for President.” Jon Lovett, the former Obama speechwriter, is less charitable, calling Avenatti’s political



aspirations “silly” and “narcissistic.” But the party’s rank and file will have the final say: Democrats recently put much of the power to pick their presidential nominee in the hands of the grassroots by weakening the superdelegate system. And the base is out for blood: more than 6 million people have signed a petition calling for Trump’s impeachment.

Avenatti says his political foray is driven by duty, not ambition. “For the longest time, people tried to make me the face of the Resistance, and I fought it for many months,” he says, leaning back in an easy chair in his well-appointed New Hampshire hotel suite. “I was hired to do a job, hired to represent a client.” But over time he came to a realization. “I began to wonder,” he says, “if maybe this was bigger than me.”

AVENATTI DRINKS approximately 15 shots of espresso each day—and makes



sure everyone around him knows it. His chiseled jaw seems perpetually jutted forward, his wiry frame coiled. Veins bulge on the temples of his egg-shaped head. Avenatti and Trump have taken opposite approaches to hair loss, and perhaps it says everything or nothing about the contrast between the two men that one constructed the world's most aggressive comb-over while the other eliminated the issue entirely.

Avenatti admits that he wouldn't necessarily be a great President. At least one of his possible Democratic primary opponents would make a better one, he says. "But if they can't beat Donald Trump, it doesn't matter." This is Avenatti's whole argument: the Democrats have "a lot of talent, but not a lot of fighters." If they opt for the type of pedigreed candidate both parties offered in 2016, they will get flattened by Hurricane Trump. For the demoralized

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*Avenatti is considering running
against Trump in 2020*

left, Avenatti believes, it's not policy or personality that's most enticing. It's winning.

Rick Wilson, the Trump-loathing GOP consultant and author of *Everything Trump Touches Dies*, agrees that it will take a media-savvy fighter, not a traditional pol, to beat the President. "You've got to be brave to go up against Trump," Wilson says. "Avenatti's got balls. Giant, clanking, titanium balls." (Wilson recently met with Avenatti; when asked if they discussed working on a potential campaign, he declined to comment.)

At this point, Avenatti's political views appear a mile wide but an inch deep. On issues like taxes, his prospective platform is TBD. What he does have is raw appeal. In early August, he made one of his first political stops, at the storied Wing Ding

put on by Iowa Democrats. The assembled press smirked as he took the stage, Avenatti recalls. But after his fiery oration brought the house down, the reporters "were just ashen," he says. "I took tremendous pride in that moment."

Avenatti says he's far from making any kind of decision about his political future. "I keep waiting to go to one of these events and to come away with a negative thought as to whether I should do this," he says, but every time "it puts me a little closer to actually doing it."

None of this would be happening if Avenatti hadn't met Daniels. Avenatti has never revealed how their connection came about. In multiple interviews, it was virtually the only topic he refused to discuss. According to Daniels' new book, *Full Disclosure*, she called several other lawyers first, but they didn't seem to take her seriously. When she finally got one who seemed willing to take the case, the lawyer, whom she doesn't name, canceled at the last minute and sent "an associate" in his place, leading Daniels to feel that she was being "dumped onto some ... junior attorney." That was Avenatti.

They met for the first time in the lounge at the Waldorf Astoria in L.A., where Avenatti lives. To turn around Daniels' case, Avenatti proposed an aggressive media push. He arranged a blockbuster *60 Minutes* interview and set about tormenting Trump and Cohen on cable and Twitter. The strategy was a success: Daniels is not only a household name but also a hero to millions of women, who now routinely outnumber men at her strip shows.

If the strategy had the added benefit of making Avenatti famous, he says that was only to help his client. "The people that are critical of our media strategy generally fall into one of two camps," he says. "Either they're jealous or they're extremely concerned."

AVENATTI TEAMED UP with Daniels at a particularly challenging moment in his peripatetic life. Born in Sacramento, he had a comfortable but transient upbringing. The family moved often for his father's job as an Anheuser-Busch manager, landing in the suburbs of St. Louis by the time he was a teenager. His most formative experience, he says, was seeing his father get laid off in 1989 after 30 years of loyal service. "That was his

identity,” Avenatti says. At 83, his father still works full time.

Like Trump, Avenatti was a transfer student who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He spent time during college working as a dirt-digging operative, flying around the country researching candidates for the consulting firm run by Rahm Emanuel, the bare-knuckled former White House chief of staff. Avenatti says he worked on more than 150 campaigns, both Democratic and Republican, including the unsuccessful effort to defeat then Republican Senator Arlen Specter in 1992 in part by dredging up details of unsavory clients Specter had represented as a criminal-defense lawyer.

Avenatti applied to law school at George Washington University in D.C. but was waitlisted and entered the night-school program in 1996 instead. His first-year torts professor, the legal scholar Jonathan Turley, saw a rare gift in him. “We can teach many things in law school,” Turley says. “What we cannot teach is instinct.”

After graduating, Avenatti moved to the West Coast. In 2007 he co-founded what’s known as a “plaintiff contingency firm,” taking lawsuits on spec and getting paid only if the litigation succeeded—a risky proposition for complicated cases that can take years to settle. But the firm notched big wins: a \$39 million settlement on behalf of two executives who’d sued their former employer; an \$80.5 million class-action settlement on behalf of Jews whose remains had been dumped in a mass grave by the L.A. cemetery where they were buried. Over the course of his career, Avenatti says, he’s reaped over \$1 billion in verdicts and settlements.

The \$1 billion figure, however, is heavily padded by settlements that were substantially reduced on appeal. In 2009 Avenatti won a nearly \$40 million verdict in a fraud case against the accounting firm KPMG; three years later the New Jersey supreme court threw out the verdict. In 2016 Avenatti was featured in a *60 Minutes* investigation of defective Kimberly-Clark surgical gowns, which he alleged were endangering the medical workers who wore them. But the \$450 million in punitive damages he won in the case was later reduced to just over \$20 million.

Avenatti has been plagued by disputes with current and former partners. In



Avenatti first vaulted to fame for his work on behalf of Daniels

July 2011 one partner, John O’Malley, sued Avenatti and another partner, Michael Eagan, claiming the two had failed to pay him his portion of partnership fees after forcing him out of the firm. Avenatti and Eagan countered that O’Malley had mismanaged and lied to clients. O’Malley got \$2.7 million in a settlement, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. Neither O’Malley nor Eagan responded to requests for comment. Avenatti declined to comment on the settlement details.

Five years later, Jason Frank, a former nonequity partner at Avenatti’s firm, sued for nearly \$15 million in back pay, according to court documents obtained by TIME. Frank also claimed that Avenatti, as managing partner, had failed to provide him with copies of the firm’s tax returns and that it misstated its profits. In February 2017, a month before the arbitration trial was to start, a judicial panel found that the firm had maliciously and fraudulently concealed its revenue numbers.

In December 2017, Avenatti’s firm reached a \$10 million settlement with Frank, who agreed to receive less than half that if the first two installments were made on time. They weren’t. On Oct. 22 a California judge ordered Avenatti, who had personally guaranteed the first two payments, to pay Frank \$4.85 million. The same day, his firm was evicted from its office in a Newport Beach building for allegedly failing to pay rent for the past four months, according to court

documents. Eagan Avenatti still owes Frank \$10 million, according to Frank’s attorney, Eric George. Avenatti claims Frank was a disgruntled former employee who had conspired to steal the firm’s clients.

Filings in a related bankruptcy case show that Avenatti’s firm had tax troubles. Court documents dated January 2018 reveal that Avenatti had paid \$1.5 million of an outstanding \$2.4 million tax liability but that the firm still owed the IRS approximately \$880,000. Federal attorneys claimed in May that Avenatti had missed the first installment of that payment. Avenatti says his firm has “fully satisfied” all of its tax liabilities. The U.S. attorney’s office in L.A. declined to comment.

It wasn’t just fellow lawyers with whom Avenatti had troubles. In 2013 Avenatti teamed up with the actor Patrick Dempsey to buy the Seattle-based coffee chain Tully’s. But just two months after they finalized the deal, Dempsey sued to get out of the partnership, claiming in court that Avenatti had borrowed \$2 million to help buy the company without telling him. Avenatti had purchased the Tully’s chain through a company he established in December 2012 called Global Baristas. In 2017 the IRS claimed Global Baristas owed \$5 million in federal taxes. In March 2018 Tully’s closed all its stores.

One attorney who previously sued Tully’s in a real estate dispute, David Nold, filed a complaint with the California state bar in March 2018 alleging that Avenatti

had purchased Tully's as part of a scheme to avoid millions in tax payments. Nold alleged that Avenatti used payments from Global Baristas to pay for the lawyers representing Eagan Avenatti in its bankruptcy proceedings. The California state bar referred the complaint for investigation in April, according to documents reviewed by TIME. Nold and the California bar declined to comment.

Although Washington State documents list Avenatti as the sole governor of Global Baristas LLC, Avenatti says he sold the company for \$27 million "a long time ago" (he doesn't remember when) and had nothing to do with the company's recent issues. He denies he hid any loans from Dempsey. As for the Nold complaint, Avenatti says that it was unfounded and that Nold had an ax to grind because of the Tully's suit. (In the Tully's suit, Avenatti notes, Nold was fined \$20,000 for contempt of court for spreading misinformation about him during the proceedings.) He says he has filed a complaint against Nold in Washington State. "He'll be lucky if he has a license to practice law in three months," Avenatti says.

AVENATTI'S PRACTICE FED an extravagant lifestyle, including a \$19 million Newport Beach mansion, two private jets and collections of high-end watches and art. He competed in more than 30 professional sports-car races and counted two Ferraris as part of his fleet. "We formerly owned several other race cars. I do not know if we own any race cars at the present time," his second wife, Lisa Storie-Avenatti, wrote in a divorce filing after he left her and their then 3-year-old son in October 2017. (Avenatti also has two teenage daughters from his first marriage.) He moved into a \$14,000-per-month apartment after the split and didn't leave her enough cash to pay the electric bill, she said in the filing, which estimates the family's monthly costs—including a staff of nannies and housekeepers, as well as an assistant and a driver—at more than \$200,000.

Avenatti, his second wife wrote, "is hot-tempered and used to having his way—when he doesn't, he gets extremely loud and verbally aggressive." In one December 2017 incident, he showed up and demanded to be let into the Newport Beach house, leading the police to be called, according to her legal filing. As

part of their custody agreement, Storie-Avenatti asked that her husband be accompanied by a nanny whenever he had visitation time with their son. One of the last times he'd been alone with the child, she claimed, he sent the boy home alone with his driver, with no car seat.

"I have no desire to publicly attack the mother of my son," Avenatti says in response. "But suffice it to say that I disagree with her characterizations." Storie-Avenatti told TIME that the divorce is "not near finalized," and declined further comment.

Home may be L.A., but Avenatti lives most of his nomadic existence on the road, preferably in five-star hotels. In June he met with TIME at the Park Hyatt on 57th Street in Manhattan. He had come to town to accompany Daniels to an interview with the local U.S. attorney's office, but the feds canceled at the last minute, leaving him fuming. His suite was strewn with legal papers as well as a pair of strappy black high heels. Asked who they belonged to, he joked, "Ivanka—wouldn't that be a story?"

Later, over lunch at the Manhattan restaurant Michael's, Avenatti was asked if he considered himself a bully. He didn't try to whitewash it. "Look, I can be aggressive at times," he says. "I didn't get to where I am by being a pushover, O.K.?" But like Trump, he prides himself on finishing fights other people start. "I don't generally go after people offensively," Avenatti says, "but if somebody comes after me, I will absolutely meet them every step of the way and then some, no question."

When Avenatti started thinking about running for President, his first call was to David Betras, a lawyer in Youngstown, Ohio, and chairman of the Mahoning County Democratic Party. In May 2016, Betras had noticed blue collar whites in the region gravitating to Trump, and he drafted a memo to Hillary Clinton's campaign, warning that she was in danger of losing states like Pennsylvania, Michigan and Ohio. After Trump won, Betras had a brief star turn as the man who'd predicted it all.

In July, Avenatti flew to eastern Ohio for dinner with Betras, then returned for his first political appearance, an annual dinner for local Democrats. "When I look at the national Democratic Party, I see weakness. I see fear," Betras says.

"Michael has picked up the corpse of the Democratic Party and breathed some life into it."

A run for President would thrust Avenatti into the middle of the party's identity crisis. The Democrats have not been this powerless since the 1920s, and their members have responded by nominating a historic number of women and people of color for office. But when it comes to the party's presidential nominee in 2020, Avenatti thinks in different terms. "I think it better be a white male," he says. He hastens to add that he wishes it weren't so, but it's undeniable that people listen to white men more than they do others; it's why he's been successful representing Daniels and immigrant mothers, he says. "When you have a white male making the arguments, they carry more weight," he says. "Should they carry more weight? Absolutely not. But do they? Yes."

Beneath the pugnacious persona, Avenatti's own political instincts are rather conventional. He's for Medicare for all but against abolishing ICE, and fears Democrats are overreaching on immigration. In his speeches, he advocates secure borders and calls on Democrats to woo back Midwestern white men. His platform's major plank, he says, would be a massive government-funded infrastructure push. "You can't go into Youngstown, Ohio, and tell everybody they're going to be retrained and go work for Google or Apple," he says. But he was vague on the details, like whether he would raise taxes to pay for it. "I'm not afraid to say I don't know yet," he demurs.

If the Avenatti boomlet is real, so too is the fact that many Democrats have little appetite for his antics. Some accuse him of sealing Kavanaugh's confirmation: Swetnick's claims were repeatedly cited by Senate Republicans, including the key swing vote, Susan Collins of Maine, as self-evidently absurd, and Avenatti's role as discrediting. But these are dangerous times to ignore the power of desperate partisans. As Republicans have discovered, outsiders sometimes see things the Establishment can't: its blind spots, its assumptions, its blithe confidence in a hollow status quo. Even Avenatti's critics have to concede he's won many of the battles he's taken up so far. He fights, and he wins: to many of the beleaguered party faithful, that may be enough. □

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sensations *Serial*
and *Making*
a *Murderer*
return—for
better or worse

—69
—66
—63
—60

1992



INSIDE

A YOUNG ACTOR BREATHES
LIFE INTO A CONVERSION-
THERAPY DRAMA

A HIT JAPANESE NOVEL ABOUT
A TRAVELING CAT FINDS ITS
PLACE IN FELINE LIT

TWO NEW TV THRILLERS
TACKLE THE FALLOUT OF
COMBAT-RELATED TRAUMA

ILLUSTRATION BY ELEANOR SHAKESPEARE FOR TIME

TRUE CRIME

Serial and Making a Murderer seek redemption in sequels

By Eliana Dockterman

SEASON 3 OF THE TRUE-CRIME PODCAST *SERIAL* doesn't explore any brutal murders where the facts don't add up. Its subjects aren't famous. They can't afford expensive defense attorneys who dramatically unearth DNA evidence. Instead, they're bar brawlers, parole violators and people caught carrying a joint. These cases rarely make the news, though some should, like the story of an innocent man who was pulled over and beaten by a cop for—by the police officer's own admission—no reason. They are simply the tales of ordinary people who pass through Cleveland's courthouse.

It's a conscious change for a podcast that became a pop-culture phenomenon in 2014 by examining the murder of Baltimore teen Hae Min Lee, allegedly at the hands of her classmate Adnan Syed. The podcast's new direction also diverges from most shows in true-crime drama, which can tend toward the salacious even when trying to educate or effect change. *Making a Murderer*, for instance, earned a rabid fan base in 2015 when it took on the story of Steven Avery, a man who has been convicted twice and exonerated once. Both *Serial* and *Making a Murderer* faced backlash for lending a too-sympathetic ear to potential perpetrators. The two shows have since taken different paths: *Making a Murderer* returned to Netflix in October to follow Avery's appeals process in new episodes, while *Serial* has wisely ventured into new territory.

Serial host Sarah Koenig addresses the pivot in the first episode of the new season, which premiered in September. "People have asked me, 'What does [Syed's] case tell us about the criminal-justice system?'" she says. "Fair question. The answer is that cases like that one, they are not what fills America's courtrooms every day."

As local news organizations fold under financial burdens, courthouse beat reporters have become increasingly rare. True-crime storytellers now have the opportunity to step in and report on the daily miscarriages of justice in order to examine the systemic problems in our legal system. *Serial* landed in Cleveland by happenstance: the city, unlike others, allows microphones in its courtrooms. But the Ohio metropolis represents every town. "We tried to look for a place that wasn't extraordinary in any way," producer Julie Snyder tells *TIME*.

Compared with the first season of *Serial*—which broke streaming records, spawned Reddit conspiracy theories and earned a *Saturday Night Live* parody—the show's third season sounds like homework. But the banality with which judges and lawyers change the course of people's lives proves fascinating—and disturbing.



Steven Avery became a cult figure after the runaway success of Netflix's *Making a Murderer* in 2015—though he remains incarcerated

In one episode, Koenig interviews a judge who regularly says he will put parolees in jail if they have a child out of wedlock. It's a jaw-dropping, unconstitutional condition. But judges and lawyers in Cleveland respond with a shrug: declarations like this are unfortunate but inevitable.

Filmmakers have long raced to document sensational crimes. But in recent years, some journalists have begun to rigorously examine the more quotidian injustices that often go ignored by the media. Tales of serial killers feel less pressing than the larger narrative of racist and classist biases that pervade the justice system. *Serial*'s third season suggests that storytellers might be better served examining ordinary cases, not extraordinary ones. "We're talking about a criminal-justice system in crisis," says Snyder. "We feel a duty to explore how that system actually works."

ALL TRUE-CRIME ENTERTAINMENT exists on a sliding scale. Some shows, like the popular podcast *My Favorite Murder*, shamelessly mine tragic tales to fulfill our most voyeuristic desires; others have loftier goals. The second



Criminal minds

After *Serial* and *Making a Murderer* won over millions of amateur sleuths, podcast producers, writers and filmmakers found new ways to bring true crime to the masses.



DIRTY JOHN

Journalist Christopher Goffard first reported on a Newport Beach resident whose romance with a mysterious man turned disastrously sour in the *Los Angeles Times*. Goffard turned those stories into a 2017 podcast, which inspired an upcoming Bravo series starring Connie Britton and Eric Bana.



THE STAIRCASE

The 2005 true-crime docuseries centered on Michael Peterson, a novelist who seemed suspiciously laid-back while being tried for his wife's murder. Director Jean-Xavier de Lestrade's film featured mind-boggling twists and turns. He added three new episodes to Netflix this year.



I'LL BE GONE IN THE DARK

Writer Michelle McNamara became obsessed with investigating the Golden State Killer, a rapist and murderer who terrorized the state for more than 10 years. Her book on his crimes was published posthumously this year, as was a podcast about her investigation.

season of *Making a Murderer* struggles to find the right balance. Avery's post-conviction lawyer Kathleen Zellner combs through every potential lead—including the personal life of victim Teresa Halbach—to find other possible perpetrators. She's doing her job. But in front of the cameras, her work can feel tasteless, even reckless.

Making a Murderer is also muddied by the media frenzy it created. The filmmakers often interrupt Avery's appeals process to show his onetime fiancée soliciting relationship advice on *Dr. Phil*, or the man who prosecuted Avery promoting his book on *Dateline*. "It all became a part of the story," says Moira Demos, who co-created the documentary with Laura Ricciardi. "How do headlines compare to what's really happening on the ground?" But these side plots distract from the very real obstacles Avery faces.

The visual nature of the medium doesn't help. Cameras tend to linger on bloodstains. Though some podcasts indulge in lengthy descriptions of corpses, the audio format feels less prurient. And podcast hosts can establish an intimacy with the listener that filmmakers

cannot: they can express skepticism or empathy during interviews. Some documentarians, in their determination to remain objective, run the risk of removing themselves from the narrative to their own detriment. *Making a Murderer's* creators use a montage of newscasters debating the ethics of their show, but they stop short of responding to that criticism themselves.

BY CONTRAST, the Peabody-winning podcast *In the Dark* feels allergic to sensationalism. For the second season, released this summer, the creators moved to Winona, Miss., to investigate the case of Curtis Flowers. A white prosecutor convicted Flowers, a black man, of the same murder six times—with the first five trials ending in either overturned convictions or mistrial. Over 11 episodes, host Madeleine Baran thoroughly dismantles the case. But the off-the-cuff attitude of some of her interviewees speaks volumes.

In one episode, a former Mississippi supreme-court justice argues that Flowers' case proves the system works: every time he was convicted, the ruling was overturned. When Baran points out that Flowers has been in prison for years as the prosecutor pursued the case again and again, the former judge replies, "While his specific physical situation might not change much, his status as a convicted felon vs. his status as an incarcerated person awaiting trial has ... There is a big distinction." He may be technically correct, but the reality for Flowers is devastating.

Systemic racism haunts *In the Dark* and *Serial*. Judges and lawyers speak in dog whistles. African Americans hesitate to call the police because of a lack of trust.

The true-crime podcasts that came after *Serial's* first season rarely addressed topics like this. But in an era when so many Americans feel that injustice is the norm and truth is subjective, these stories have a greater responsibility not only to report on the craziest cases but also to say something meaningful about how daily instances of discrimination and corruption poison society. In their new installments, *Serial* and *In the Dark* demonstrate that true crime can be more than just a guilty pleasure. □

MOVIES

A beating heart saves a dutiful film

By Stephanie Zacharek

WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHEN MOVIES OFTEN SEEM MORE important for what they're saying than for what they are. When we go into a quiet film about a serious subject—like *Boy Erased*, directed by Joel Edgerton and adapted from Garrard Conley's 2016 memoir about enduring conversion therapy—our automatic response is to approve of its aims, even if we can see its flaws. To criticize a well-intentioned film excessively feels churlish, maybe even a little dangerous, especially in a social and political climate that seems to be backsliding in terms of progressiveness. No one wants to be on the wrong side of the argument.

And yet, even though *Boy Erased* is well acted and thoughtful, there's something vaguely disappointing about it. The bare bones of the story are horrifying, especially when you consider that it's based on real events, and on a heinous practice that still hasn't been totally eradicated: Lucas Hedges plays Jared, an Arkansas teenager who's sent away by his ostensibly loving conservative Christian parents (Russell Crowe and Nicole Kidman) to be "cured" of homosexuality. The costly facility they pack him off to—it goes by the creepy, benign-sounding name Love in Action—is run by an amateur therapist, Victor Sykes (played by Edgerton). Sykes makes it look like he's administering tough love, when really he's inflicting emotional sadism on his charges.

But the scenes set at the facility aren't the most effective ones in the movie—they may sicken us, but they don't surprise us much. That may be why *Boy Erased* sometimes feels more like a sturdy dramatic exercise than a viscerally potent work. It's also the second movie about conversion therapy

to be released this year: *The Mis-education of Cameron Post*, directed by Desiree Akhavan and starring Chloë Grace Moretz, focused more on the absurdity of such programs than on their cruelty.

The best scenes in *Boy Erased* are the most understated ones, flashbacks in which we see Jared navigating basic teenage emotional stuff, like figuring out how to rebuff his high school girlfriend's sexual advances without hurting her feelings. Hedges is such a terrific, sensitive actor that he makes even these small moments wrenching. At this stage, Jared isn't yet sure that he *is* gay, and he can't give himself permission to figure it out. Hedges' eyes tell us everything about Jared: it's as if he's waiting for the world to reveal some secret to him—he doesn't see that the secret is inside himself, crying to get out. And Hedges is stunning in a sequence in which a college friend, a seemingly nice guy Jared has a crush on (Joe Alwyn), commits an act of sexual brutality. Jared is so confused and anguished by what's happened to him that for a time he drifts through the movie like a ghost. Edgerton has a lot to say with *Boy Erased*; it's a virtuous film. But Hedges is the movie's heartbeat. He's perfect just the way he is. □

'The people who really need to see it are the people who hold opinions that can really be shifted.'

JOEL EDGERTON, to *Deadline* after the film screened at the Toronto Film Festival in September



< Hedges, Crowe and Kidman in *Boy Erased*: all of the movie's performances are valiant, but Hedges outshines the rest

MOVIES

To Indiana farmland, with purpose

FREDERICK WISEMAN has been making documentaries for more than 50 years, and the subjects he chooses—the New York Public Library, a small Texas boxing gym—sometimes don't seem big enough to fill a whole movie canvas. But once you follow his curious eye, and see what he sees, you know why you're looking. In *Monrovia, Indiana*, he and his cameras move into a small farming town, sitting in on Lions Club meetings, checking out the funnel cakes and auto decals at the annual town fair, and sometimes just taking in the vista of corn and other crops that farmers grow there.

What do people care about? What do they spend their money on? What do they do in their spare time? Wiseman seeks, and finds, the answers, illuminating a pocket of this divided America that most of us will never visit.

No one in *Monrovia, Indiana* speaks overtly about politics, and there's not a MAGA hat in sight. Wiseman simply visits the places—a cafe, a gun shop, a baby shower taking place at a community center—where people gather. Their very lives, as opposed to their views, become the fabric of the movie. Always a silent witness, Wiseman just watches and listens. And like nearly all his films, this one has a spare, precise visual beauty. It's workaday haiku that enlarges our view of the world. —S.Z.



Witch hunt: Johnson gets twisted in *Suspria*

MOVIES

A vibrant classic reanimated as a cold, beige corpse

GIRL GOES TO BALLET SCHOOL RUN BY witches. Now there's an elevator pitch for you, and it pretty much covers the plot of Dario Argento's 1977 *giallo* masterpiece *Suspria*, in which Jessica Harper plays a naive young ballet student trapped in an academy of evil schemes. But *Suspria* was never about the plot; it was all about the vibe, the bold splashes of fuchsia fake blood, the op-art board-game production design, and the music, a spooky, percussive earworm by the Italian group Goblin.

Luca Guadagnino, a genius of sorts who has made some lush, passionate movies (*I Am Love*, *Call Me by Your Name*), now gives us his own reimagined *Suspria*. But unlike its forebear, this one is bland, grisly, boring and silly—there's nothing poetic or erotic about it. It's not the fault of the actors, among them Dakota Johnson as wide-eyed student Susie, reinvented here as a Mennonite naïf with big Martha Graham dreams, or Guadagnino regular Tilda Swinton as Madame Blanc, one of the top instructors at the

elite dance academy where Susie goes to study. (She's also a witch, of course, and in a media-baiting twist dons heavy makeup to portray character actor Lutz Ebersdorf, who in turn is playing psychoanalyst Dr. Klemperer.) These two performers, and a host of hardworking supporting ones (including Harper, in a cameo), give their all, sometimes even

making their actions—if not their Pina Bausch by way of “What a Feeling!” dance moves—quasi-believable.

But Guadagnino has made the story, set in a tumultuous 1977 Berlin, insanely complicated; he's thinking too much and feeling too little.

If this *Suspria* is at times unpleasantly grim—there are nightmare visions of worms, and some broken mirrors and blood-smearred walls—it's not exactly scary. Worst of all, Guadagnino has opted for a drab, soul-killing color palette. Who wants a beige *Suspria*? Guadagnino has sucked the juice out of Argento's concept, and the arty corpse he's left behind isn't pretty. —S.Z.

'I'm not a professional dancer. It was terrifying.'

DAKOTA JOHNSON, in *Entertainment Weekly*, on shooting the *Suspria* dance sequences



ESSAY

On the wondrous world of cat fiction

By Stephanie Zacharek



WHENEVER I'M reading a hardcover cat-related book in public—especially one featuring a cat who talks—I always remove the dust jacket. Wouldn't want anyone to

think I'm one of *those* ladies. While the “cat lady” stereotype endures, the reality is that there are secret, and sometimes not-so-secret, leagues of men who are just as crazy about them. The central character of Hiro Arikawa's winsome and bittersweet novel *The Travelling Cat Chronicles*—a best seller in Japan, now translated into English by Philip Gabriel—is one of those men. Satoru loves cats in general and one cat in particular, a former stray with an auspiciously crooked tail whom he names Nana.

Nana himself, in a peppery interior monologue, tells the story of the duo's

first meeting: He has been sleeping on the hood of Satoru's silver van, parked outside his apartment building; the young man notices and tries to coax him with a bit of chicken. “You think you'll get all friendly with me by doing that?” the soon-to-be-named Nana observes incredulously. “I'm not that easy. Then again, it's not often I get to indulge in fresh meat—and it looks kind of succulent—so perhaps a little compromise is in order.”

The dog lover's bookshelf, stretching from J.R. Ackerley's *My Dog Tulip* to John Grogan's *Marley and Me* and beyond, may be long. But there are nearly as many cat book genres as there are types of cats, too: mysteries starring cats, memoirs about people's lives with cats, guides to figuring out how to make our cats' lives better. The mind of a cat remains essentially unknowable, no matter how many cat books a cat person reads, but Arikawa clearly knows cats as well as any human can. From the outset they must make their disdain for humans clear, only to give in and accept the food already. Because what cats feel, Arikawa knows, is not really disdain

but a kind of cautious custodianship of their love. It's not something they can give away to just anybody. That understanding of the wariness of feline affection—and its ability to grow, over time, into a thrumming force as deep as a throaty purr—drives this fleet, funny and tender book.

Shortly after that first meeting, Nana truly becomes Satoru's cat, settling quickly into the rhythms of domestic feline contentment. But fate intervenes, and he and Satoru strike out on a journey that illuminates Satoru's past and the friendships—human and feline—that helped shape him as an adult.

Satoru takes Nana to a grave site along the way, prompting some observations about the differences between the ways humans and animals view death. The cat's way, as Nana explains it, could free some humans from lifelong angst. “When an animal's life is over, it rests where it falls,” he notes. “If you have to consider what's going to happen after you die, life becomes doubly troubling.”

THE STORY Arikawa tells is ultimately joyous, though it's brushed with melancholy. No one gets through life without sadness, as any human who has lost a cat, and any cat who has lost a human, knows. This is a gentle book about the way cats bear witness to our lives, weaving through and around our days just as readily as, in moments of spontaneous affection or plain old hunger, they weave around our legs.

Are cats born with strong, distinct personalities? Or do their personalities take shape only when they're exposed to humans? Not even a human as perceptive as Arikawa can answer those questions definitively. But her book

stands out within the world of cat literature even so, and it's a world worth exploring. Arikawa examines loyalty and the nature of belonging—of people belonging to animals, and the other way around. Her book gives in to emotion without slipping into sentimentality. And like cats themselves, it walks with dignity. So you can read it with the dust jacket on. □

‘When an animal's life is over, it rests where it falls.’

HIRO ARIKAWA



NONFICTION

Final lessons from a giant

Stephen Hawking's *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*, published seven months after his death, offers the legendary theoretical physicist's parting thoughts on the universe.

—Rachel E. Greenspan

1

THERE IS NO GOD

Hawking addresses each possible rebuttal to the question of all questions with the utmost confidence: some people think God created space and energy, Hawking writes. "But science tells a different story."

2

AI MAY SURPASS US

Hawking predicts the invention of "brain-computer interfaces," connecting human brains to the Internet. But with innovation comes risk, he cautions—and we must ensure that our own human wisdom can outsmart the power of technology.

3

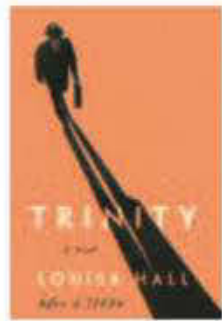
WE WON'T SURVIVE ON EARTH

Evaluating the state of the climate alongside the current political climate, Hawking paints a picture of a grim future: a "Second Nuclear Age," as he calls it, will come with a period of "unprecedented" climate change. His warning: only humanity can prevent it.

FICTION

The imagined true story of the father of the atom bomb

By Bethanne Patrick



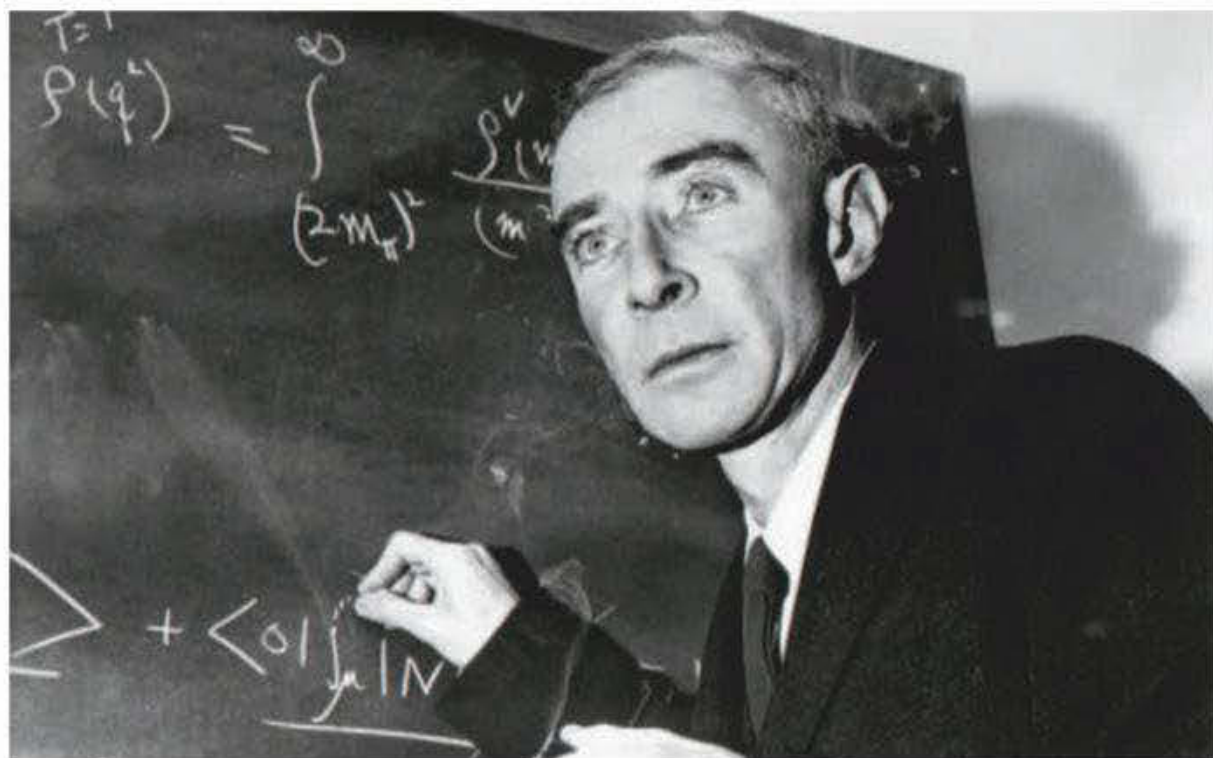
LOUISA HALL understands that the words we don't write can be just as important as the ones we do. In her past novels, which include *Speak* and *The Carriage House*, the

poet and author earned acclaim for her ability to wield language with unusual precision. Once again few words go to waste in her new book, *Trinity*, a brilliant imagining of how the details omitted from one notorious man's story might define him more fully than the broad strokes we already know.

Hall uses fictional interviews with seven characters to form a portrait of physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, father of the atom bomb and director of the Manhattan Project, which created the weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the closing days of World War II. We learn about "Oppie" through narrators like an FBI agent who once tailed him, a former Princeton secretary he once worked with and his great love Jean Tatlock—figures who translate Hall's invented expansions of

Oppenheimer's real-life timeline and fill out his humanity. He's not simply the creator of a weapon—he's charming, educated and in love. Although Oppenheimer famously declared he carried no weight on his conscience from the detonation of the bombs on Japan, the man we meet in Hall's novel is a serious person reckoning with his impact over decades.

What might have happened if he had admitted guilt? Hall stops short of moralizing, seeing the arc of Oppenheimer's career as its own Aesopian gift. As an adviser to the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, Oppenheimer was quick to argue for nuclear arms control, fearing unfettered proliferation if sanctions were not put into place. *Trinity* sounds a wake-up call to those who have failed to ease the threat of planetary destruction through a slowness to effect controls on fossil fuels, other environmental dangers and, indeed, nuclear weapons. If they took action, the world would change. Oppenheimer changed course in his own life—and through Hall's imagined reading of his mind, she shows us that we still can too. □



Oppenheimer never reconciled his political views with the future his work created

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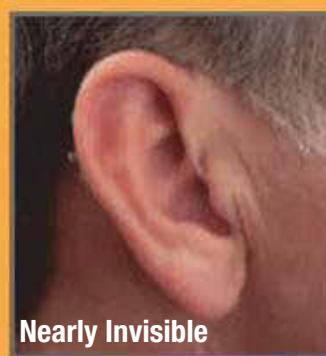
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TELEVISION

The things soldiers still carry

By Judy Berman

NETFLIX'S *BODYGUARD* OPENS WITH A FAMILIAR ACTION scene: Riding a train with his kids, Sergeant David Budd (Richard Madden, most recognizable to viewers as *Game of Thrones*' Robb Stark) spots a frantic transport cop. Minutes later he's talking down a would-be suicide bomber, a shaky young woman in an abaya (Anjali Mohindra). But there's a twist: David tells her that he saw friends die for nothing in Afghanistan, and that the experience taught him to be wary of politicians. "You and I," he says, "we're just collateral damage."

It isn't just a negotiation tactic. David's tour of duty left him scarred, disillusioned and deeply suspicious of the government—wounds he shares with some of the veterans in another show, Amazon's *Homecoming*. Though their styles diverge, both shows fuse the political with the psychological to consider the lingering effects of combat on soldiers. It's not a new topic for TV (see also: *M*A*S*H*, *Homeland*). But the way these stories zero in on the morally compromised institutions responsible for individual suffering screams 2018.

Bodyguard, a BBC megahit that arrives on Netflix on Oct. 24, is a six-episode sprint that subverts thriller tropes just often enough to earn its reliance on them. A talented but unstable vet whose political outrage doesn't mesh with his job as a bodyguard to government VIPs, Madden's David never feels too polished. When he's assigned to protect a hawkish, power-hungry Home Secretary (Keeley Hawes), it seems equally likely that he'll assassinate her. But the question isn't just whether he'll turn out to be a hero or a villain; it's whether heroism is even possible in these conditions.

Homecoming may be the more hyped show of the two on this side of the Atlantic, thanks to its pairing of star

< Madden and Hawes in Netflix's *Bodyguard*

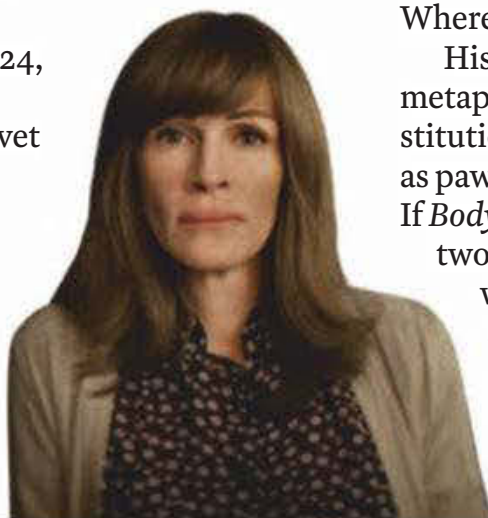
Julia Roberts and director Sam Esmail, as well as its origin as a popular podcast. Coming to Amazon on Nov. 2, the 10-episode first season casts Roberts as Heidi Bergman, a psychiatric professional who once ran an experimental program called *Homecoming* whose stated aim was to ease traumatized soldiers back into society. Years after her abrupt departure from the facility, Heidi is waiting tables at a dive when a Department of Defense investigator (Shea Whigham) walks in and inquires about one of her old patients, Walter Cruz (Stephan James). That's when she realizes she can barely remember her time at *Homecoming*.

ESMAIL IS DIVISIVE. Though his shambolic USA thriller *Mr. Robot* can be exhilarating, its constant narrative misdirection grew exhausting after the first season. Thankfully, he wields his paranoid style more judiciously in *Homecoming*: tiny palm trees in Heidi's fish tank subtly underscore themes of deception. Birds that emit terrible, belching squawks set a freaky mood but appear rarely. Slow pans and overhead shots suggest surveillance. The frame narrows during scenes set in the present (which is actually a few years in the future), almost like smartphone footage.

For the most part, Esmail lets his superb cast tell the story of Heidi's search for answers about *Homecoming* and its shadowy parent company, Geist. Roberts is a Hitchcock heroine, lost in her own mind. As her remote, bro-ish boss, Bobby Cannavale is the military-industrial complex made flesh. James builds a mystery into Walter's every line: Where is this gregarious vet now?

His story and David's converge as metaphors for the way politicians, institutions and corporations use soldiers as pawns in games of power and profit. If *Bodyguard* is the more thrilling of the two shows, it's also the less surprising, with a resolution as conventional as its structure. *Homecoming* is something more artful, its characters capable of genuinely shocking and its conclusion cryptic enough to haunt dreams. □

Roberts comes to TV in Amazon's surreal new drama *Homecoming*

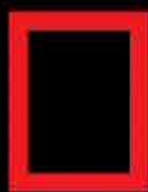




TASHA VAN ZANDT

‘What we see changes who we are. When we act together, the whole thing is much more than the sum of the parts. So I hope that, together, we’ll create something that the world will remember.’

—JR



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WARD

not justice

DAVIDS KUSHNITSKY