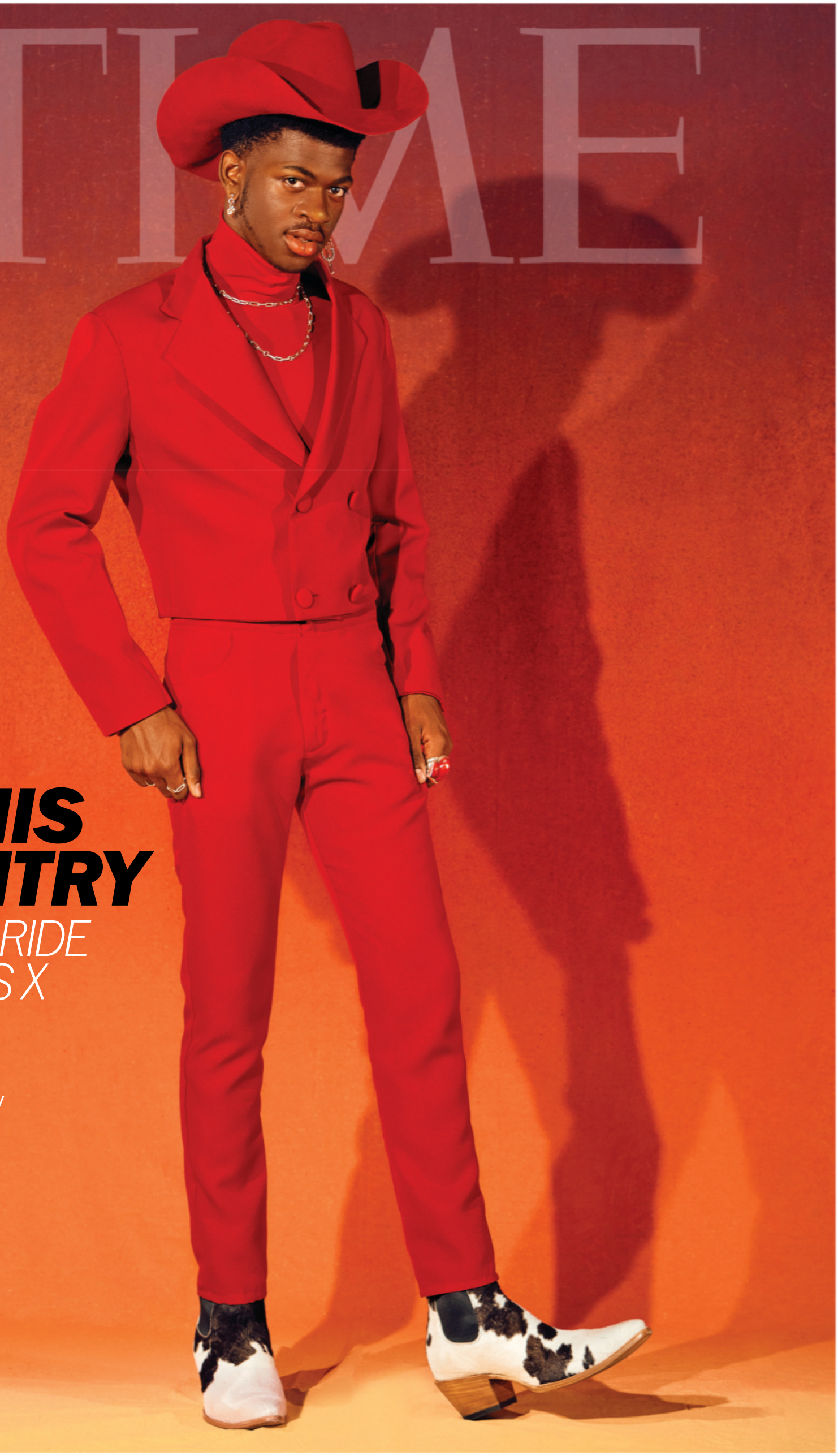
AUGUST 26, 2019

TIME



# IT'S HIS COUNTRY

## THE WILD RIDE OF LIL NAS X

by **ANDREW R. CHOW**

## JON MEACHAM & TIM MCGRAW ON THE SOUND OF AMERICA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Survivor photos by Kevin Lynch.

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# TIME

VOL. 194, NO. 7 | 2019




*Antigovernment protesters near a police station in Kowloon, Hong Kong, on Aug. 11*

*Photograph by Adam Ferguson for TIME*

**ON THE COVER:** *Photograph by Kelia Anne for TIME*


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# Conversation


## WHAT YOU SAID ABOUT ...

**ENOUGH.** The Aug. 19 cover story on the El Paso and Dayton shootings and the growing threat of white nationalism sparked strong debate. "I grew up around guns and own a couple," wrote Vicki Hoss of Leland, N.C., "but there's no reason someone can get a gun so easily." In response to President Bill Clinton's op-ed calling for the reinstatement of an assault-weapons ban, the singer Barbra Streisand tweeted: "There is no reason for any civilian to have a weapon of war." Charles Batteau of Glen Allen, Va., believes "the solutions will probably require changes in our culture and society which will be uncomfortable for liberals and conservatives alike," while Saul P. Heller of Peabody, Mass., writes "the people must take matters into their own hands" by voting.

***'What we need even more than gun control is "hate control."'***

**PEARL PAWLOWSKI,** Aurora, Colo.

**TONI MORRISON, 1931–2019** In that same issue, best-selling author Tayari Jones' tribute to the late Nobel laureate Toni Morrison inspired Twitter users to share what the author known for chronicling the black American experience meant to them. Jalisa Whitley in Washington, D.C., said Morrison encouraged "awe-inspiring black writers to thrive." Antwan Eady of Savannah, Ga., wrote that the Pulitzer Prize winner's influence "will forever move our culture forward ... We grieve hard because we love hard." @_nicolefalls tweeted that Jones' tribute is "the only" remembrance she's been "waiting to read."

***'A loving tribute ... written by the ultimate fan. Thank you for the gift of this deep read.'***

**MEL KING,** Brooklyn

## Back in TIME

*Merle Haggard*
May 6, 1974

Country music was also on the cover of TIME 45 years ago, as musicians responded to the social and political tumult of the era. "Country is taking on a new sound, and a new diversity and message," the magazine reported. TIME crowned Merle Haggard "the king of country" in a story in which the king described what he does as "just journalism put to music." Read the whole cover story at **time.com/vault**




**A WOODSTOCK LOVE STORY**
As part of TIME's coverage of the 50th anniversary of the famed festival, meet the couple on the iconic album cover of the *Woodstock* soundtrack, Bobbi *(left)* and Nick Ercoline, who have been married for 48 years and still live in New York State's Hudson Valley, not far from Yasgur's farm. Watch the interview and read the full story at **time.com/woodstock-couple**

**SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT** ▸ In the Aug. 5 TIME with ... Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, we misstated the size of the parliamentary majority held by her coalition government. The government has a three-person majority. The story also incorrectly described her as Europe's youngest female leader. Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, 41, holds that distinction. In "A Guide to the Ides of 50" (Aug. 19), we misstated where in California the movie *Sideways* takes place. It is set in the Santa Barbara area.

The cover illustration of our July 29 issue, "The Next Space Race," was a homage to TIME's cover from Dec. 6, 1968, titled "Race for the Moon." That original cover was illustrated by Robert Grossman, an American painter, sculptor, filmmaker and author who died on March 15, 2018. His posthumous graphic novel, *Life on the Moon,* was released in May.

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# For the Record

## ‘Why should I waste time talking to him when he, of course, is not going to listen to me?’

**GRETA THUNBERG,** 16-year-old climate activist, on whether she wants to meet President Donald Trump in New York City in September

## ‘It’s been a tough year, but we’ll keep going.’

**SERENA WILLIAMS,** U.S. tennis player, after retiring from the Aug. 11 Rogers Cup final in Toronto because of back spasms; Bianca Andreescu, 19, became the first Canadian in 50 years to win the tournament

## $295

**Cost of a new room-service menu announced on Aug. 9 at the new W Hotel in Washington, D.C., designed for making *mukbang,* a genre of videos that originated in South Korea in which people binge-eat on camera**

## ‘HOW DO YOU SAY NO TO GOD?’

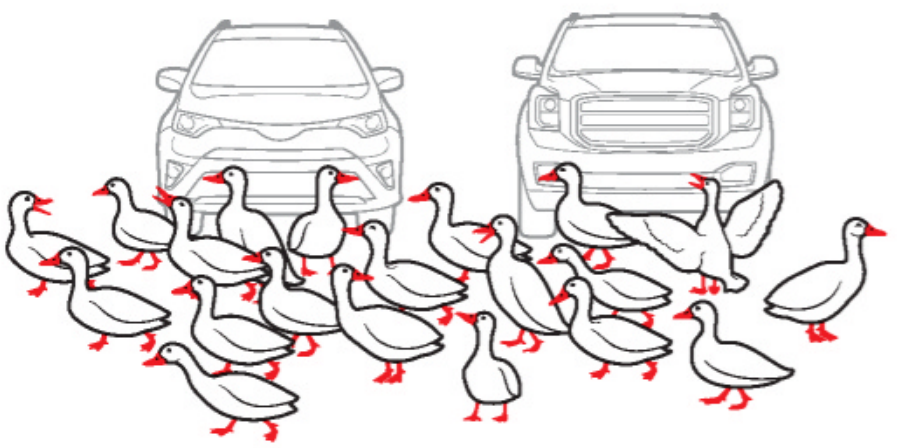
An **ANONYMOUS WOMAN,** one of nine who accused renowned opera singer Plácido Domingo of sexual harassment in an Aug. 13 AP investigation

## ‘An unworkable legislative graveyard.’

**HARRY REID,** former Democratic Senate majority leader, describing the U.S. Senate in an argument for “abolishing” the filibuster—the rule that allows members to delay votes on critical legislation by talking at great length

## 45

**Number of ducklings that crossed a five-lane road on Aug. 7 in Biddeford, Maine, 30 minutes south of Portland, briefly stopping traffic**



## ‘Give me your tired and your poor who can stand on their own two feet.’

**KEN CUCCINELLI,** acting U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services director, parodying the poem on the Statue of Liberty on Aug. 13 while backing a rule that could deny green cards to immigrants who receive public assistance

## 55 ft.

**Height of a fairground ride inside England’s Norwich Cathedral, which gives visitors a unique view of the ornate ceiling; it will be taken down on Aug. 18**

**Lion**
A lion at the Leipzig Zoo mysteriously ate her cubs


**Lynx**
A Eurasian lynx was born in the Pyrenees for the first time in almost a century

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

SOURCES: CBS; ESPN; NEW YORK TIMES; NPR

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# The Brief

**GRIEVING AGAIN**
**Mourners gather on Aug. 7 to honor the victims of the mass shooting in El Paso, Texas**

**INSIDE**



PHOTOGRAPH BY CALLA KESSLER

POLITICS

# Push for new gun laws faces reality check

By Alana Abramson and Philip Elliott

THE PATTERN IS FAMILIAR BY NOW. A MASS shooting prompts calls for stricter gun laws. Politicians promise to fix the problem, then run into roadblocks. Intensity fades. Congress ends up passing nothing.

But after back-to-back mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, and Dayton, Ohio, left 31 dead in 13 hours of violence, there are the slightest of hints that this time might be different.

President Donald Trump and Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell have cracked open the door to a debate over new gun measures like universal background checks, which roughly 90% of Americans say they support. Bipartisan talks between congressional and White House staffs have begun. The National Rifle Association, normally the biggest impediment to new gun legislation, is struggling internally and could pose less of a hurdle.

For supporters of new gun measures, the biggest challenge may be the calendar. Data from the left-leaning online-polling group Civiqs has indicated that support for tougher gun laws spikes after high-profile mass shootings before ebbing relatively quickly. And there will be no action on federal legislation until at least September, when Congress returns from its summer recess. "In the political world, in the media world, in the world we live in, those issues fade, I hate to say it, after three or four weeks," says Representative Peter King, a Republican who supports universal background checks for gun purchases.

**ONE EXCEPTION** to this rule may be if Trump steps into the fray. "What can make the impact lasting," says King, "is the President coming out for universal background checks."

Trump has been fickle on the issue. On Aug. 9, he voiced support for a package of proposals that includes background checks, but also noted the NRA would have a say in the matter. He has trumpeted his commitment to the Second Amendment and is keenly aware of the issue's hold on his base. The President can be swayed by public opinion just as easily as he is by phone conversations with gun-rights advocates like NRA leader Wayne LaPierre.

McConnell is a different matter. He rejected calls to return Congress from recess to tackle gun legislation, but told a radio station in Kentucky that bipartisan talks would be on the agenda when lawmakers return to D.C. "I want to make a law," he said. "Not see this political sparring go on endlessly."

Democrats in the House and on the 2020 campaign trail have blamed McConnell for the stalemate, pointing to two pieces of gun legislation passed in February that have lain dormant in the Senate. McConnell recognizes that appearing to stand in the way of new measures could jeopardize some of the party's support, especially among suburban women. But contrary to Trump's assertion that McConnell is "totally on board" for "intelligent background checks," the Senator's aides are quietly saying he didn't commit to supporting the restrictions passed by the House, and note that most of the seats the GOP will be defending in 2020 Senate races are in the South and West, where support for guns runs deep.

***'What we can't do is fail to pass something. What I want to see here is an outcome.'***

**MITCH MCCONNELL,** Senate majority leader, on Aug. 8

The other variable in the equation is the role of the NRA. The gun-rights group's once unassailable political clout may have dipped amid investigations into financial mismanagement and resignations of top officials. In last year's midterm elections, groups pushing for new gun restrictions outspent the NRA, ending an era of financial dominance. Another sign of the group's shrinking potency: in exit polls, only 8% of voters ranked guns as their top issue—and of that 8%, 4 in 5 voted for Democrats.

Gun-safety groups are now mobilizing to ensure that the debate stays front of mind. Everytown for Gun Safety, a nonprofit partially funded by former New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, is organizing rallies in every state in mid-August to push for background checks and red-flag laws, which would allow authorities to take weapons away from individuals deemed dangerous. The group has also targeted a list of Senators it thinks could back such legislation and is planning to make itself a visible presence at town halls during the recess.

The Democratic presidential field has similarly seized on new gun laws as a campaign issue. Everytown and its affiliates persuaded the contenders to attend a daylong forum on gun violence on Aug. 10 in Des Moines, Iowa, where candidates took turns promising action and laying blame at the President's feet. "God help us if 20 years from now there's a candidate forum with presidential candidates in the aftermath of mass shootings, and a day-to-day beat of daily shootings, saying, 'O.K., what are we going to do to make sure it's different this time?'" South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg said. "Let's not let that happen."

If the sentiment sounds familiar, there's a reason. It's what politicians say after every one of these tragic shootings. ◻

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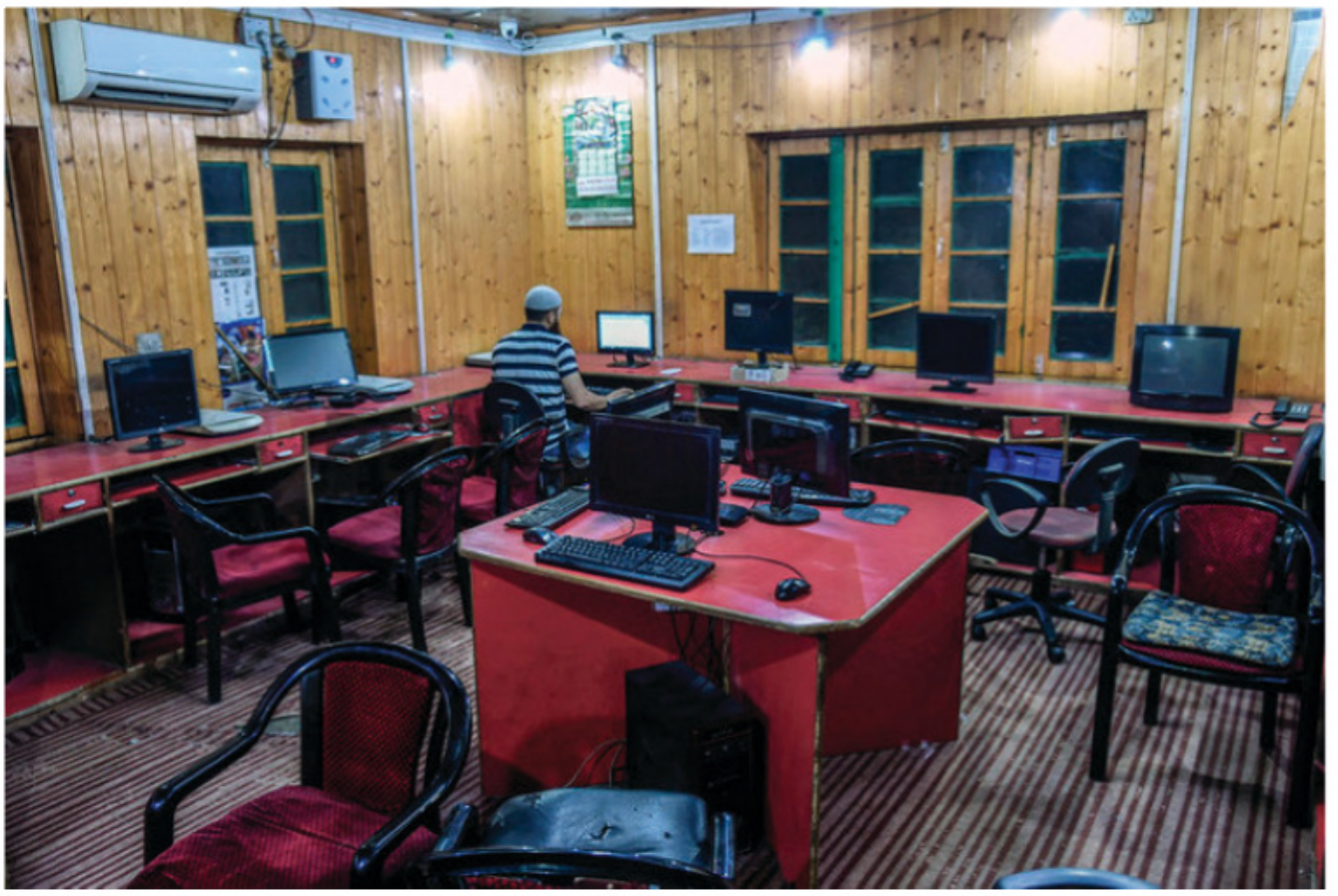

**DARK WEEK** A man works in a newsroom in Srinagar, the summer capital of Indian-administered Kashmir, a disputed Himalayan territory. On Aug. 5, India revoked the semiautonomy of this Muslim-majority region, imposing a rolling curfew and cutting Internet, cell-phone and landline access. Since then, with Indian troops on the streets, many journalists in the region have been unable to work. Of some 50 prominent newspapers, only about six were still being published during the blackout.

THE BULLETIN

## A nuclear accident in northern Russia accelerates a 21st century arms race

THE NEWS TRICKLED OUT SLOWLY. ON Aug. 8, Russian state media reported at least two people killed in a mysterious accident in the country's far north. Then came news of a spike in radiation near a White Sea military facility and footage that seemed to show doctors in hazmat suits treating victims. Finally, on Aug. 13, five days after the blast, the Kremlin confirmed five nuclear scientists had died testing one of the newest weapons in President Vladimir Putin's arsenal, the first apparent victims of a new arms race.

**IGNEOUS ROCKET** Putin promised the world a new type of nuclear missile during a 2018 address, one able to penetrate any defense. To illustrate his point, he showed an animation of a rocket striking Florida. But the explosion on Aug. 8 suggests the project has hit some snags. A state news agency reported that the blast was powerful enough to hurl several staff members off the seaborne testing platform, raising fears locally and as far away as Norway that the damaged weapon could continue leaking radiation.

**TWISTED ARMS** The accident comes at a perilous moment in the history of nuclear disarmament. After accusing Russia of deploying banned weapons for years, the U.S. formally withdrew on Aug. 2 from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, signed in 1987 to contain both countries' arsenals. Another nuclear treaty between the U.S. and Russia, New START, is due to expire in 2021. "There's a qualitative arms race going on," says Gary Samore, who led the talks on New START as an official in the Obama Administration. "There's a whole new class of strategic weapons that the U.S., Russia and China are working on that are not subject to any arms-control treaties."

**GUILE AND ERROR** One of those weapons might face delays after the accident in northern Russia. But the Kremlin put on a brave face. "Accidents, unfortunately, happen," Putin's spokesman told reporters on Aug. 13. But Russia, he added, is still "considerably far ahead" of its rivals in this 21st century arms race. —SIMON SHUSTER

*NEWS TICKER*

### Norwegian mosque attacked

Police said a "young white man" was arrested in Oslo on Aug. 10 after **allegedly opening fire at a mosque.** He injured one man before he was overpowered. Officials said he wore a camera during the attack and had expressed far-right sympathies online. He is also suspected of killing his stepsister.

### Trump delays some China tariffs

The White House said on Aug. 13 it would not impose tariffs on imports from China of cell phones, laptops, video-game consoles and some clothing **until Dec. 15, helping keep prices low through the holiday shopping season.** The delay came as the Trump Administration continues to pressure China over its trade practices.

### Rift opens in Yemen's civil war

Fighters backed by the United Arab Emirates **seized the Yemeni port city of Aden from the Saudi-backed government on Aug. 10,** reportedly leaving dozens dead. The conflict hinted at a wedge between Saudi Arabia and the UAE—uneasy allies in the war against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen.

NEWS TICKER

## Newark hands out water after lead concerns

Officials in Newark, N.J., began giving free bottles of water to residents on Aug. 12 after the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said city-issued lead filters may not be completely effective.** Any amount of lead in water can cause serious health problems, and tests in Newark have found lead levels above the federal standard.

## U.S. and Taliban fail to reach deal

Talks between U.S. officials and the Taliban concluded on Aug. 12 without a deal. The Trump Administration has been seeking **to end America's nearly 18-year war in Afghanistan** but would ensure a U.S. pullout only on the condition that the Taliban give up global terrorism.

## A$AP Rocky convicted of assault

On Aug. 14, a Swedish court convicted U.S. rapper A$AP Rocky of assault related to a street brawl in June, but he will avoid jail time. The case **attracted attention from President Trump and several celebrities,** with the U.S. even warning Sweden of "negative consequences" if it did not release the rapper.

GOOD QUESTION

# Can changing what we eat help stop climate change?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMANS AND the land we live on has evolved over hundreds of thousands of years, but no period has involved such rapid change as the past century, when we began using land in new ways to extract wealth and build a modern economy. A landmark U.N. report released on Aug. 8 warns that humans now face a moment of reckoning over the way we use the planet's land: either we change our ways, particularly our diets, or risk devoting huge swaths of land to uses that spew far more carbon dioxide than we can afford.

The report, authored by more than 100 scientists from 52 countries on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the U.N.'s climate-science body, found that emissions from land use—practices like agriculture and logging—cause nearly a quarter of human-induced greenhouse emissions.

Still, land elsewhere on the planet has balanced the effects of those emissions. In the 10 years leading up to 2016, forests, wetlands and other land systems soaked up 11.2 billion metric tons more carbon dioxide per year than they emitted. That's more carbon than the world's coal-fired power plants release in a given year. "As we've continued to pour carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the earth's system has responded and it's continued to absorb more," says Louis Verchot, a lead author of the study.

But "this additional gift from nature is not going to continue forever," he says. A slew of practices like deforestation, soil degradation and the destruction of land-based ecosystems threaten to halt that trend, driving land to release more carbon dioxide than it absorbs.

Adapting our diets can help. Climate advocates are hoping this year's IPCC report can inspire a similar wake-up call to last year's, which warned of the dire effects of more than 1.5°C of warming. As global demand for food has grown, farmers have converted forests into agricultural land, leading to a release of carbon stored in trees. Soaring meat production, which requires other food products to feed livestock, has been especially damaging.

A global shift from meat- to plant-based diets could yield big results, cutting as much as 8 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases per year. That's more than the annual emissions of the entire U.S. Eating less meat means lower emissions from livestock and the fertilizer needed to grow their food, and offers the chance to reforest land that farmers would have otherwise used for grazing.

Changing the way we farm the remaining land would also make a difference. Farmers can implement a range of practices—from changing livestock feed to adapting how soil is managed—that can significantly reduce emissions and even suck carbon out of the atmosphere. Some farmers, traditionally known as a conservative bunch, say they're open to new ways of doing business. "We are ready to solve this problem," says Matt Russell, a beef and produce farmer in central Iowa, adding, "if we're asked to." —JUSTIN WORLAND

CURRENCY

# Money matters

Anti-Brexit activists have threatened to boycott a planned 50-pence coin that commemorates Britain's scheduled exit from the E.U. on Oct. 31. Here, other controversial coins. —*Julia Webster*

**A QUARTER NAKED**
In 1917, the U.S. released a quarter **depicting the Liberty goddess dressed in flowing cloth** that exposed her right breast. It caused substantial controversy, with critics calling it "obscene."


**COIN TOSSED**
Belgium dropped plans in 2015 for a €2 coin to mark the fall of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo, after France complained that celebrating its defeat threatened to undermine European unity.

**THE PENNY DROPS**
News emerged last year that plans to celebrate the children's author Roald Dahl with a coin were aborted by the U.K.'s Royal Mint in 2014 because of the *Matilda* author's history of anti-Semitic remarks.

CURRENCY: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; GIAMMATTEI: JOHAN ORDONEZ—AFP/GETTY IMAGES; ENDANGERED SPECIES: GETTY IMAGES (4)

LOST

## $5.2 billion, by Uber

IT WAS SUPPOSED to transform urban transportation. But Uber, Silicon Valley's ride-hailing luminary, is discovering there's a reason the government subsidizes public transit: moving people around town is very expensive.

Uber, which became a publicly traded company in May, announced on Aug. 8 that it lost $5.2 billion in the three months ending June 30. (Rival Lyft lost $644 million over the same period.) Though a chunk was related to Uber's initial public offering, the earnings report amplified the concerns of analysts who fear the company has no clear path to profitability. Shares hit an all-time low on Aug. 13.

Uber says it will roll back deals offered to riders in an effort to make more money. But customers have been hesitant to pay full price for services from venture-capital-subsidized industries like grocery delivery and bike sharing. "This younger generation that is coming of age has zero need to own a car," Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi told analysts after the earnings report. But Uber's financials suggest car dealerships can breathe easy.

—ALANA SEMUELS

*Clockwise from top left: A grizzly bear, a 10-year-old male bald eagle, a manatee and her calf in Florida's Crystal River, a California condor*

WEAKENED

## Endangered Species Act

*A race to survive*

THE U.S. FEDERAL LAW THAT ONCE SAVED THE BALD EAGLE FROM extinction is facing a new set of rollbacks by the Trump Administration, worrying conservation scientists about the future of at-risk species.

Signed into law in 1973 by President Richard Nixon, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is credited with saving America's national animal—as well as the California condor, the grizzly bear, the northern gray wolf and more. Today it protects more than 1,600 plant and animal species, and 99% of the species placed on the endangered list have not gone extinct, says Jeremy Bruskotter, a professor at Ohio State University.

According to Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, the goal is to bring the ESA "into the 21st century." New rules for implementing the act include no longer automatically giving "threatened" species the same protections as "endangered" species. The government is also now required to consider economic factors before categorizing a species as endangered or threatened. Experts say this is ridiculous. "Recovering species is a biological question, not an economic question," says Leah Gerber, an ecologist at Arizona State University.

The rules are set to take effect in September, but not if state attorneys general have anything to say about it. California and Massachusetts have already announced plans to sue the Trump Administration over the changes, and others are expected to follow. "Now is the time to strengthen our planet's biodiversity, not to destroy it," California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said in a statement. —JASMINE AGUILERA

RULED

That a Virginia school's **transgender bathroom ban** violated the Constitution and discriminated against Gavin Grimm, by a federal judge on Aug. 9.

ANNOUNCED

That scientists are giving **two experimental Ebola drugs to all patients** in the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Aug. 12, after the drugs were so effective that their trials were stopped early.

ELECTED

**Right-winger Alejandro Giammattei** as President of Guatemala on Aug. 11. He said he would renegotiate a recent immigration deal with the U.S.

DIGITIZED

**J.D. Salinger**'s four books, which Little, Brown will publish for the first time as e-books. The author hated technology, but his son wants to expand the books' reach.

SEALED

The area around **Notre Dame Cathedral** for 10 days starting on Aug. 13, while workers clean lead particles that spread after a fire damaged the building in April.

AGREED

To **sell Tumblr to the owner of WordPress,** by Verizon on Aug. 12. Tumblr, which sold for $1.1 billion in 2013, reportedly sold for less than $3 million this time.

PLANNED

The **reunion of CBS and Viacom,** the companies said on Aug. 12, after more than a decade apart.

# In the wake of a hometown tragedy, **Beto O'Rourke** finds his voice

**By Lissandra Villa/El Paso**

BETO O'ROURKE SITS IN AN ARMCHAIR IN HIS El Paso living room, tapping his foot and trying not to talk about himself. It's three days after the mass shooting that left at least 22 dead and 26 injured at a Walmart just under 10 miles from where his family lives. His kids have strewn arts and crafts across the coffee table. (Friendship bracelets, in just about any color you could want.) His wife Amy is sitting in the chair next to his.

O'Rourke is talking about the shooter. "This guy who came here was afraid of this community because he had been taught to be afraid," he says. "These border communities are safe not despite but because they're communities of immigrants. There's something very special about these places."

In the days since the murders, O'Rourke, who represented El Paso in Congress from 2013 until the start of this year, has emerged as a voice for a shattered community of 680,000 that has for years been among the safest in the U.S. He immediately returned from Nevada, where he was campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination. He's met with victims and their families. He's gone to vigils. He's donated blood. And he's tapped into the anger that has been building, here and throughout the U.S., as each mass shooting is met with "thoughts and prayers" but no significant legislative action.

O'Rourke has been unsparing in his criticism of Donald Trump, calling the President a white supremacist and assigning blame for the attack to his rhetoric. "When you look at what he has said and done in its totality, it is unmistakable the intent," O'Rourke says. "This is how it happens. Using his pulpit and his access to the country through social media, mass communications and the media. Sending these signals out unambiguously."

Since his return to El Paso, O'Rourke's words have drawn on the grief that surrounds him. It can seem as though the tragedy has helped him find his voice for the first time in what has been a difficult campaign. On the trail, O'Rourke has struggled to make a compelling case for his candidacy. His polling and fundraising numbers have sunk. At times he's seemed lost, as if he's unsure why he's running. But now, as he talks about the toxicity of Trump and the strength of El Paso, there's no lack of clarity. "The threat of white supremacy and white-nationalist terrorism has to be met with the urgency that it demands," he says. "And we have not seen that."

**O'ROURKE QUICK FACTS**

***Family roots***
He is a fourth-generation Texan, according to his campaign, and grew up in El Paso, where he served on the city council.

***Senate run***
He lost his 2018 Senate campaign against Ted Cruz by about 220,000 votes, despite national attention.

***Campaign woes***
He is polling in single digits, and his fundraising fell from $9.4 million in the first 18 days of his campaign to $3.6 million in the second quarter of 2019.

**THE MEMORIAL** for the victims in El Paso has overtaken a curb overlooking the Walmart. It's brimming with posters, prayer candles, stuffed animals, flowers, white crosses, and Mexican and American flags in an ever growing tribute. The mood there is often somber. But on the night of Aug. 7, the area was packed with hundreds of people celebrating the victims' lives, with a mariachi band, therapy dogs, dancing and prayer circles.

O'Rourke arrived to do a TV interview. As he spoke into the camera, people started to realize he was there. O'Rourke paused to shake hands as a sea of people called his name.

O'Rourke grew up in El Paso as the son of a local politician and business owner. He went to Columbia University and lived in New York City before moving home and starting an Internet company. In 2005, he was elected to the city council. Seven years later, he won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

When the 2018 midterms came around, O'Rourke decided to run for Senate against Republican Ted Cruz. During that race, he captured the hearts of many in the Democratic Party, becoming something of a national sensation even though he lost narrowly. For the past several months, he's been on the road campaigning. But right now, O'Rourke says, he can't imagine being anywhere else.

O'Rourke reached the front of the memorial and laid down the flowers. He approached Antonio Basco, whose wife Margie Reckard died in the shooting. Basco and O'Rourke exchanged quiet words and prayed together.

The day before, O'Rourke had walked me through the victims and the families of victims he's met with, with striking recall—their injuries, their stories, their relationship to one another. There was Octavio Lizarde, who was at Walmart shopping with his nephew. Lizarde survived, with a bullet wound in his foot, but his nephew, Javier Amir Rodriguez, did not. There was Chris Grant, who threw things at the shooter to try to distract him. He was shot twice but survived. There was Maribel Latin, who was selling *horchata* to fundraise for her daughter's soccer team. Latin hid behind vending machines. She was shot, but both she and her daughter survived.

After about an hour, O'Rourke left the memorial. Heat lightning appeared over the mountains in the distance. Basco remained, wearing a Ford baseball cap and holding a handkerchief and a flower. Someone moved in to hug him. And then someone else gave him another hug. And another hug. And another. And a sign of the cross on his forehead. And another hug. And Basco stood there, accepting the condolences, as the sky turned purple and pink.

When Trump came to El Paso to visit with first responders, victims and their families, O'Rourke joined a protest put on by local organizations

IVAN PIERRE AGUIRRE—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

to honor the victims and call for gun-control legislation. His feud with Trump had been escalating. O'Rourke had said Trump had "no place" in El Paso, and issued a profanity-laden answer to a reporter who asked about the President. Trump, in return, mocked O'Rourke's paltry poll numbers.

Hundreds of people joined the rally. Protesters carried signs that said things like THERE'S BLOOD ON YOUR LITTLE HANDS. The broader message was that Trump was not welcome. "As of right now, [O'Rourke's] a good representation of who we are as El Paso, and I'm happy about that," says Deidrah Carrillo, a 23-year-old El Paso resident at the rally. Nevertheless, she added, O'Rourke wasn't her top presidential candidate at this point.

O'Rourke's struggles in the campaign have prompted pundits to suggest he could best help the Democratic Party by dropping out of the presidential race to run against the other Texas Senator, John Cornyn, in 2020. Asked if he's reconsidered his run for President, O'Rourke says no. "There's not the space in my head or the place in my heart to think about that, you know?" he says.

***'There's not the space in my head or the place in my heart to think about that.'***

**BETO O'ROURKE,** on suggestions that he should run for Senate in 2020 instead of the presidency

As President, O'Rourke says, he would take steps to prevent massacres like this, from focusing federal law enforcement on domestic terror threats to pushing for universal background checks and "ending the sale of weapons of war." He wants a national standard for red-flag laws and an end to the "boyfriend loophole," which would keep those convicted of domestic abuse or stalking a dating partner from purchasing or owning guns.

In addition, it's important to have a leader "who reflects that the power of this country is in its diversity," O'Rourke says. "That's our genius and what has so powerfully and positively set us apart from the rest of the world."

It's not yet clear what will change over the coming months—for the city, the country or the candidate. But seeing the grief in his community has clearly hardened O'Rourke's resolve to confront Trump. To "see it right here at home, and know full well that this will continue unless something changes," O'Rourke begins. "Yeah. So that's where I'm coming from." ◻

# LightBox

# Simone Biles flips and twists into gymnastics history

WHEN YOU'RE A SHOO-IN FOR YOUR sixth national title, you might consider playing it safe. Especially in a demanding sport like gymnastics where longevity is nearly impossible to achieve. But Simone Biles is not just any athlete. She's the most decorated U.S. gymnast, with 25 world championship and Olympic medals. She earned that sixth national all-around title at the U.S. Gymnastics Championships in Kansas City, Mo., on Aug. 11, and made history doing it. During the meet, the 22-year-old from Texas completed not one, but two skills that have never before been successfully executed by a female gymnast in competition.

Biles opened her unforgettable performance by dismounting the precarious 4-in.-wide balance beam with a double-double—two somersaults while simultaneously twisting twice in the air. Then on floor exercise, she launched her triple-double jumping combination, catapulting herself high enough off the mat to flip twice while twisting three times before becoming earthbound again. Immediately afterward, she picked up her phone to check the replay. "I didn't want to be the last person to see it," she said. Biles already has two skills (on floor and vault) named after her because she was the first to pull them off; if she performs these new ones in international competition next season, she will have four.

Next summer at the Tokyo Games, she hopes to become the first U.S. gymnast to repeat as Olympic all-around champion—and make history yet again. —ALICE PARK

*Biles competes on the balance beam at the U.S. Gymnastics Championships on Aug. 9*

PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMIE SQUIRE—GETTY IMAGES

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NATION

# CAN JUSTICE STILL BE DONE?

By Joyce White Vance

Jeffrey Epstein is dead. His victims will never have their day in court, at least not with this defendant. It is critical that the Justice Department conduct a thorough investigation into the circumstances of his death. But how it is handled is also critical to the integrity of the DOJ. That is why Attorney General William Barr needs to recuse himself.

Epstein was charged in July by prosecutors in the Southern District of New York with sex trafficking and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking. They claimed he exploited and abused dozens of minors, with victims as young as 14, and was so focused on keeping his pipeline of victims flowing that he resorted to paying some of them a fee to recruit more girls.

Six months before that, at his confirmation hearing, Barr was asked if he would investigate the handling of a decade-old Florida plea deal that let Epstein escape responsibility for his conduct. He said he thought his former law firm was involved in the case so he might have to recuse himself. Although Barr did ultimately recuse himself from an investigation into the Florida case, he did not from SDNY's case.

This is concerning. In addition to the law-firm conflict, Alex Acosta, who served in Donald Trump's Cabinet with Barr, was the U.S. Attorney in Miami when Epstein received his travesty of a plea deal. And Barr's father was the headmaster of an elite New York City school that hired college dropout Epstein to teach math and physics. Do these circumstances amount to a conflict of interest requiring mandatory recusal? Barr, apparently after consulting with career ethics officials at the DOJ, concluded they did not. But the appearance of impropriety, particularly given the President's past relationship with Epstein and concerns that Barr had acted as the President's lawyer rather than the people's with regard to the Russia investigation, should have dictated that he recuse himself from the SDNY case.

*Epstein pleaded guilty in 2008 to solicitation and procuring a person under 18 for prostitution*

Barr's tenure as Attorney General has left a large segment of the country with questions, not just about the DOJ but also about where his personal loyalties lie. Given his misleading summary of the Mueller report, no matter how objective his leadership is in this matter, there will be doubts about the outcome. Conspiracy theories, including those retweeted by the President, will continue to circulate, and we will have one more situation that erodes the already ebbing faith that people are willing to place in the institution Barr leads.

Yet if the past is prologue, he won't recuse himself. When it emerged during his confirmation process he had sent an unsolicited memo to the DOJ and the White House arguing that it cannot be obstruction of justice when a President does "facially lawful" acts that involve an exercise of his constitutional authority, like firing an appointee, many people, myself included, suggested he take himself out of the running to replace Jeff Sessions. He did not.

**IT IS OFTEN SAID** the DOJ's integrity is like a reservoir, slow to fill but easily emptied by a small leak. The reservoir is leaking. The day after news of Epstein's apparent suicide broke, a tweet from the partisan podcast *Mueller, She Wrote* articulated the worst case: "Whether you believe there are nefarious forces within the DoJ that assisted with or turned a blind eye to the Epstein death, the bigger point is no one trusts the department of justice. No one." We are in a dangerous place if people no longer trust the DOJ is doing justice.

"Mr. Epstein's death raises serious questions that must be answered," Barr said in a statement. "In addition to the FBI's investigation, I have consulted with the Inspector General who is opening an investigation into the circumstances of Mr. Epstein's death." But as Attorney General, Barr would still be the ultimate authority over the investigation.

How did a high-profile, high-risk prisoner have access to items he could use to hang himself? What procedures were and weren't followed? These questions must be answered. If Barr cares about the DOJ's reputation, he should step aside and let career people conduct and oversee the investigation. If he does this, and if the investigation is exhaustive with results promptly made public, it would be a step in the long process of restoring faith in our justice system. All of us—especially Epstein's victims, who have already been subjected to unthinkable trauma—are entitled to no less.

*Vance is a distinguished professor of law at the University of Alabama and a former U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama*

**SHORT READS**

*Highlights from stories on* **time.com/ideas**

## What was lost

The novelist Marlon James wouldn't be the writer he is today without Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon.* In a tribute to the late author, he writes that the book taught him **"to not write a single word until you heard the music in it first, because Toni Morrison made words burn and cry, but also dance."**

## Unequal enforcement

Since Harry Anslinger became the country's first drug czar in the 1930s, America has been inconsistent in its treatment of people who use drugs. In an excerpt from their book *Opium,* John H. Halpern and David Blistein write that Anslinger's **"racial prejudices tarnished his reputation in ways that, even allowing for 20/20 hindsight, can't be dismissed."**

## A history of trauma

The alleged El Paso shooter called the massacre "a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas." But viewing Mexicans as outsiders is not new, writes Yolanda Leyva, director of the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas at El Paso. **"It is the predictable outcome of 200 years of a white-supremacist idea's growth in this state."**

EPSTEIN: UMA SANGHVI—THE PALM BEACH POST/ZUMA; HEALTH: GETTY IMAGES

THE RISK REPORT

# Italy's populists gamble on new elections and turmoil

By Ian Bremmer

ITALY HAS HAD 67 governments over the past 74 years; in that respect, the impending collapse of the 5 Star–Lega coalition government is hardly surprising. For 14 months, the far-right Lega party helmed by current Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has managed to cooperate with the anti-establishment 5 Star Movement despite little agreement on actual policy beyond a general contempt for the E.U. Lega's priorities have centered on stemming migration flows into the country and cutting taxes; for 5 Star, the focus has been on expanding the social safety net and radically reforming Italy's sclerotic political system. Tensions in the coalition have risen in recent months as Lega has been accused of soliciting help from the Kremlin ahead of European elections in May, a charge that Salvini dismisses as the "fantasies of James Bond." Things came to a head earlier this month when 5 Star voiced opposition to a long-cherished Lega rail project, which Salvini used as a pretext to set the government collapse in motion.

Despite Lega's being the junior coalition partner in the government (5 Star controls 227 seats to Lega's 124 in Italy's 630-seat Chamber of Deputies), Salvini has been driving the policy agenda. Much of that has to do with his talent for communication and Lega's rising poll numbers, which at last count hovered at 38%—more than double the vote share it received in the 2018 general election. Should those poll numbers hold steady or even improve on the back of a political campaign, Salvini is poised to become the country's next Prime Minister. And if things really break Salvini's way, he will be able to form a right-wing government with another far-right (but much smaller) party called the Brothers of Italy, while excluding center-right Forza Italia and its leader, former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. There remains a chance another constellation of parties will band together to steer the government through difficult budget negotiations with the E.U. at the end of the year. That wasn't what Salvini was expecting when he called for a no-confidence vote, but Italian politics can be unpredictable.

**MOST PEOPLE ASSUME** an empowered Salvini will be inclined to push Brussels to the brink if and when he secures Italy's premiership. But we are more likely to see policy continuity from the next Lega-led government, as Salvini has been the one calling the shots for some time now. Salvini is also less likely to purposely pick a major fight with Brussels once firmly in power—both because he no longer has the political shield of being a junior partner in a coalition led by someone else, and because he's poised to lead the longest-serving Italian government in several generations should he perform as well as expected. As it is, Italy is struggling with its economy and finances; a genuine confrontation with Brussels would put the screws to an Italian economy that Salvini vowed to resuscitate as a pro-business candidate.

***A genuine confrontation with Brussels would put the screws to an Italian economy that Salvini vowed to resuscitate***

Factor in the increasing likelihood Europe will tip into recession (the specter of a no-deal Brexit, ongoing turmoil in Turkey and rising U.S.-China tensions all weigh heavily on slowing European growth), and Salvini's life looks set to get more difficult even if he does win big in elections. Europe shouldn't be worried Salvini will purposely force a major confrontation with Brussels so much as that he'll be unable to manage an economic crisis, whether triggered by him unintentionally or by circumstances beyond his control. ◻

HEALTH

## $H_2No$

The National Academy of Medicine recommends that adult women and men drink at least 91 and 125 oz. of water a day, respectively. But pounding large amounts of water morning, noon and night may not be the best way to hydrate. "People who are drinking bottles and bottles of water in between meals and with no food—they're probably just peeing most of that out," says David Nieman, director of the Human Performance Lab at the North Carolina Research Campus.

A 2015 study based on analyses of urine samples found that several drinks—including milk, tea and orange juice—were more hydrating than water. That's not to suggest people should dump water for these other beverages. But ingesting water along with amino acids, fats and minerals seems to help the body take up and retain more $H_2O$.

Nieman's research has found that eating a banana is better than drinking a sports beverage when it comes to postexercise recovery. He says eating almost any fruit along with some water will aid hydration, and sipping water every 20 to 30 minutes, rather than chugging whole glassfuls, also helps.

*—Markham Heid*


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# Weight loss for kids? There's an app for that

By Jamie Ducharme

IN FEBRUARY, WEIGHT WATCHERS SET OFF A FIRESTORM when it announced it would offer its weight-loss program, for free, to teens ages 13 to 17. It angered many parents, as well as eating-disorder experts who felt it could give rise to obsessive and unhealthy behaviors in adolescents. WW—as the company rebranded itself last September—refused to shrink from the criticism, says CEO Mindy Grossman: "It actually strengthened our resolve and made us offensive." Now WW is doubling down: on Aug. 13, the company rolled out Kurbo by WW, a free nutrition and weight-loss app for kids 8 to 17. The app will inevitably draw praise, for giving a new tool to the millions of U.S. children struggling with weight, and outrage, for potentially furthering unhealthy body standards and eating behaviors, in equal measure.

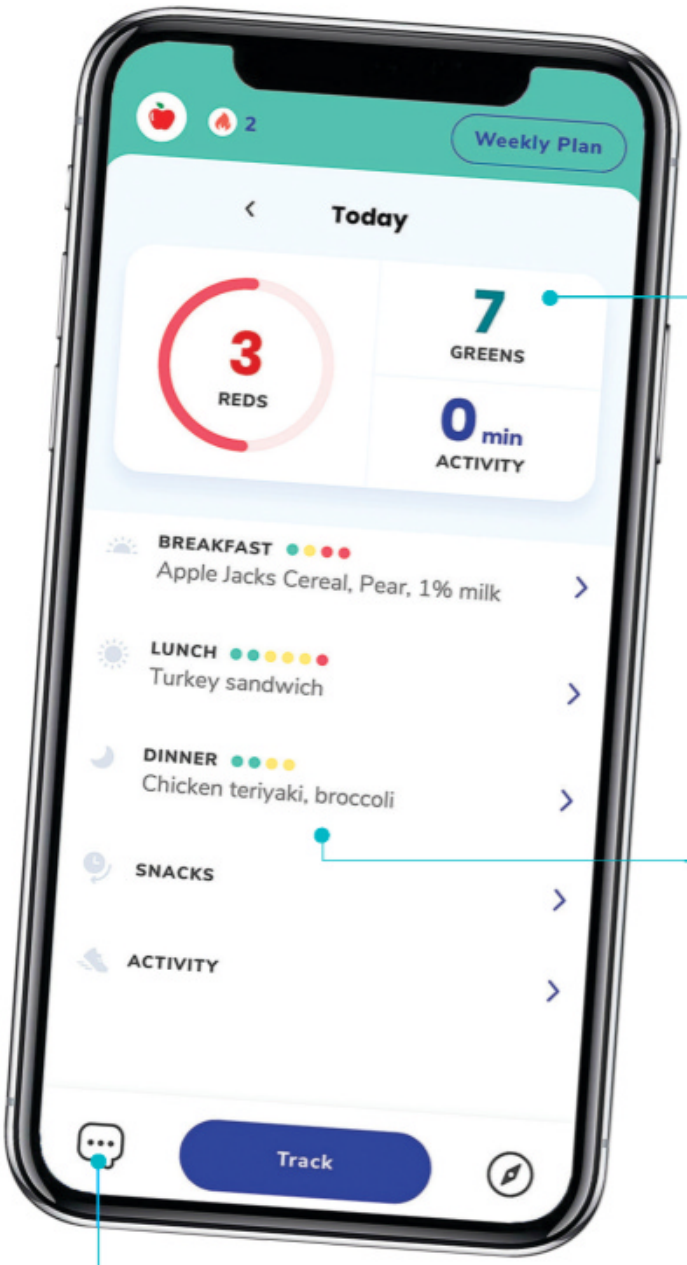
WW acquired the nutrition app Kurbo in 2018, then spent a year expanding it, adding features like breathing-exercise instructions and a Snapchat-inspired interface. Kids, or parents on their behalf, enter their height, weight, age and health goals, then begin logging what they eat. Kurbo ranks food choices using a Stanford University–developed "traffic light" system: green items are "go" foods that can be eaten freely; yellow foods should be consumed in moderate portions; and red foods should make kids "stop and think." For a fee—starting at $69 for a month—weekly video coaching is also available. Coaches are trained to pick up on signs of disordered eating.

**IT COULD BE** a good business decision for a company that's struggling to define its place in an increasingly diet-averse culture; its stock prices have fluctuated wildly, from $103 last summer to $21.50 this month. Almost 38% of American teenagers ages 16 to 19 have tried to lose weight, and nearly 20% of kids ages 2 to 19 qualify as obese, according to the latest government data. Obese kids are likely to continue struggling with their weight as they age, underscoring the need for interventions that start young. "The sooner the better," says Dr. Brooke Sweeney, a specialist in adolescent weight management at Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, Mo. "It's so much easier to maintain weight or slow down how fast they're gaining weight vs. losing weight."

However, some studies suggest that weight-loss efforts can, if not done right, lead to or worsen disordered eating and body-image issues. Apps may exacerbate the issue. A small 2019 study found that almost half of roughly 100 participants reported negative feelings like guilt, obsession or social isolation after using nutrition and fitness apps. Still, apps can also be an easy and accessible way for families to adopt healthier habits, says Dr. Stephenie Wallace, an associate professor of pediatrics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. She likes Kurbo's traffic-light system but stresses that children shouldn't use it by themselves. "Younger kids are going to need support [from an adult] to help supervise their progress," she says.

Extensive research into Kurbo's approach show it can promote healthy weight loss. A Massachusetts General Hospital study published in July (undertaken independently of Kurbo and WW) found that a traffic-light system lowered the average calorie counts of meals purchased by a sample group of around 5,700 adults in a hospital cafeteria over two years. And an independent study presented at the Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference in July found that 84% of child Kurbo users saw a reduction in their body-mass-index percentile after 21 weeks. It's effective because instead of restricting unhealthy foods, it subtly reinforces healthy eating patterns, says WW's chief scientific officer, Gary Foster, an adjunct professor of psychology in psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania. "You don't want kids thinking about grams of this and ounces of that," he says. "The goal is never to [say], 'You'll never have a cookie again.' It's progress, not perfection."

Sweeney says that's the right philosophy for anyone trying to get healthier, regardless of age. In an ideal world, she says, a doctor would be involved in that effort too, especially where kids are concerned. But the U.S. obesity epidemic exists in the less-than-ideal real world, and it demands creative answers like Kurbo. ☐




**GREEN MEANS GO**
Kids should be eating lots of "green" foods, such as fruits and veggies, every day

**EASY TRACKING**
Kids enter the foods they've eaten, and Kurbo logs them by color—not by calories

**EXTRA HELP**
Video coaching is available for kids whose parents are willing to pay an added fee

COURTESY WW; PHONE: GETTY IMAGES; ILLUSTRATIONS BY BROWN BIRD DESIGN FOR TIME

# The border crisis needs humanity, not fear

By Angelina Jolie

WE AMERICANS HAVE BEEN CONFRONTED BY DEVASTATING images from our southern border and increasingly polarized views on how to address this untenable situation.

At times I wonder if we are retreating from the ideal of America as a country founded by and for brave, bold, freedom-seeking rebels, becoming instead inward-looking and fearful.

I suspect many of us will refuse to retreat. We grew up in this beautiful, free country, in all its diversity. We know that nothing good ever came of fear, and that our own history—including the shameful mistreatment of Native Americans—should incline us to humility and respect when considering the question of migration.

I'm not a lawyer, an asylum seeker or one of the people working to protect our borders and run our immigration system. But I work with the U.N. Refugee Agency, which operates in 134 countries to protect and support many of the over 70 million people displaced by conflict and persecution.

We in America are starting to experience the pressures other nations have faced for years: countries like Turkey, Uganda and Sudan, which host 6 million refugees between them. Or Lebanon, where every sixth person is a refugee. Or Colombia, which hosts over 1 million Venezuelans in a country slightly less than twice the size of Texas. There are lessons—and warnings—we can derive from the global refugee situation.

**THE FIRST IS THAT** this is about more than just one border. Unless we address the factors forcing people to move, from war to economics to climate change, we will face ever growing human displacement. If you don't address these problems at the source, you will always have people at your borders. People fleeing out of desperation will brave any obstacle.

Second, countries producing the migration or refugee flow have the greatest responsibility to take measures to protect their citizens and address the corruption and violence causing people to flee. But assisting them is in our interest. Former senior military figures urge the restoration of U.S. aid to Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, arguing that helping to build the rule of law, respect for human rights and stability is the only way to create alternatives to migration. The U.N. Refugee Agency is calling for an urgent summit of governments in the Americas to address the displacement crisis. These seem to be logical, overdue steps. Our development assistance to other countries is not a bargaining chip, it is an investment in our long-term security. Showing leadership and working with other countries is a measure of strength, not a sign of weakness.

Third, we have a vital interest in upholding international laws and standards on asylum and protection. It is troubling to see our country back away from these while expecting other countries, which are hosting millions of refugees and asylum seekers, to adhere to a stricter code. If we go down this path, we risk far greater chaos. An international rules-based system brings order. Breaking international standards only encourages more rule breaking.

Fourth, legal experts suggest there are ways of making the immigration system function much more effectively, fairly and humanely. For instance, by resourcing the immigration courts to address the enormous backlog of cases built up over years. This would enable prompt determination of who legally qualifies for protection, and at the same time disincentivize anyone inclined to misuse the system. The American Bar Association and other legal scholars are calling for immigration courts to be made independent and free from external influence, so that cases can be fairly, efficiently and impartially decided.

***We can be fearless, generous and open-minded in seeking solutions***

There are also proven models of working with legal firms to provide pro bono assistance to unaccompanied children in the immigration system without increasing the burden on the U.S. taxpayer. Expanding these kinds of initiatives would help improve the effectiveness, fairness and speed of immigration proceedings and ensure that vulnerable children don't have to represent themselves in court. Approximately 65% of children in the U.S. immigration system face court without an attorney.

We all want our borders to be secure and our laws to be upheld, but it is not true that we face a choice between security and our humanity: between sealing our country off and turning our back to the world on the one hand, and having open borders on the other. The best way of protecting our security is to uphold our values and address the roots of this crisis. We can be fearless, generous and open-minded in seeking solutions.

*Jolie, a TIME contributing editor, is an Academy Award–winning actor and special envoy of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees*

JOHN MOORE—GETTY IMAGES

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*Police prepare for an antigovernment protest on Aug. 10 near a police station in the Tai Po area of Hong Kong's New Territories*


World

# THE BATTLE FOR THE SOUL OF HONG KONG

***The city fights to keep its freedoms intact as China grows impatient***

BY FELIZ SOLOMON/HONG KONG

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM FERGUSON FOR TIME

# HOW DO YOU STOP A CITY IN ITS TRACKS?

By bringing Hong Kong International Airport, one of the world's busiest transit hubs, to a standstill. Hundreds of flights were canceled and countless travelers stranded in what appears to have been the largest-ever shutdown of a major airport.

The occupation came to a halt the following day in a brief surge of violence, as protesters turned on at least two people ostensibly within their ranks—detaining and injuring a reporter for a Chinese state-controlled newspaper and a man suspected of being an undercover Chinese officer disguised as an activist. Riot police stepped in to break up the fracas, this time without the tear gas and rubber bullets used freely in other skirmishes. One officer was caught on a cell-phone video drawing a handgun in the middle of a chaotic tussle, but did not fire.

The tension in that scene defines the battle for Hong Kong midway through its third month. The city's embattled leader, Chief Executive Carrie Lam, warned earlier that the protests risk pushing Hong Kong further "into an abyss," as fears began to spread that Chinese law enforcement might intervene. Joining the hum of paranoia rippling across social media, U.S. President Donald Trump said he had received intelligence that troops were massing at the border. Before sharing undated footage of what appeared to be Chinese military vehicles in transit, the President tweeted: "Everyone should be calm and safe!"

There is no longer any doubt that Hong Kong is on a collision course with the Chinese government, which has ruled the former British colony since 1997. What began as an uprising against a single piece of legislation has spiraled into all-out rebellion against Beijing's encroaching authoritarianism, and a demand for more democracy. Peaceful processions have morphed into pitched battles on the dense residential streets. Lam and her largely pro-Beijing government have all but vanished, hiding behind columns of anonymous riot police and making occasional, highly scripted remarks to the press. The increasingly radical nature of the protests has not, as authorities expected, diminished their popular support. But the demonstrators are nonetheless bracing for a lethal blow as the government's patience wears thin.

Long before the city streets became a battleground, China had already begun waging a war for Hong Kong's soul. Under President Xi Jinping, the Communist Party has quietly used its levers of social control: the freest courts, schools, media and economy on Chinese soil. "Just as he's cracked down on any signs of dissidence in mainland China," says Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong, there has been a "whittling away of free speech, the autonomy of universities, an undermining of the rule of law, and that's increased people's anxieties."

Hong Kong's populace recognizes that the city's unique character and freedoms are ebbing away—and many are willing to make sacrifices to defend them. With arrests on the rise, they risk their liberty attending marches that authorities have started to label "unlawful." They risk the city's status as a financial portal, as the unrest begins to take a toll on the economy. The fear now is that some may even sacrifice their lives as China decides how to bring this summer of demonstrations to an end. "I don't really see a way out," says political analyst Sonny Lo. "We're just hoping the situation won't deteriorate."

**THE ANNIVERSARY** of Hong Kong's handover to Chinese sovereignty, July 1, marked a turning point in the crisis, when anger shifted directly to symbols of Beijing's rule. Brian Leung Kai-ping doesn't regret what he did that night, but he knows it will cost him. The 25-year-old student was among the scrum of demonstrators who forced their way into the city's legislature, known as LegCo. Having shattered glass walls with a battering ram, they climbed up an idle escalator; felt their way through unlit corridors; and pried open doors before spilling onto the chamber floor in their uniform of black T-shirts, dust masks, hard hats and goggles. "That moment was so powerful," says Leung. "The root cause of our problem was right there in that chamber."

A scene of anarchy ensued as protesters ransacked government offices, defaced portraits of the city's leaders, and spray-painted slogans on walls and furniture like HONG KONG IS NOT CHINA, NOT YET. Not knowing what to do next, confused-looking kids milled around in what by then resembled a disaster zone. "At that moment, I chose to step up and take off my mask," Leung says. He crawled on top of a lawmaker's desk, tore off his respirator and shouted, "We are at the point of no return!"

How Hong Kong arrived at that moment is a tale of promises slowly coming

*Travelers wade through crowds of antigovernment protesters at Hong Kong International Airport*

undone. When the territory was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 under an agreement called "one country, two systems," it was guaranteed a high degree of autonomy meant to safeguard its way of life for 50 years. This craggy outpost on the South China Sea, home to 7.3 million people, is known as "Asia's World City" because of its cosmopolitan nature. At the time a capitalist enclave in a communist empire, the regional finance hub once served as the conduit for almost all commerce between East and West. Its clean governance, independent judiciary, freedoms of religion, expression and assembly—all but vanished on the mainland—are cherished by its citizens.

Over the past 22 years, Hong Kongers have periodically mounted the barricades to defend their city's essential spirit. In 2003, an estimated half-million people took to the streets and successfully stymied a national-security bill outlawing sedition and treason. In 2012, a student protest movement led by then 15-year-old activist Joshua Wong scuttled Beijing's efforts to impose a "patriotic" school curriculum broadly viewed as brainwashing. Two years later, not long after Xi came to power, the Umbrella Movement brought their fight to the world's attention. The 79-day occupation of a busy commercial district was sparked by outrage over images of police blasting pepper spray at student protesters, again led by Wong, who had reclaimed a public square fenced off by the government.

The sight of kids screaming in pain and being dragged away by officers in riot gear moved tens of thousands of people to join a march, planned earlier by more established pro-democracy figures, against a proposal by Beijing to vet candidates for the city's chief executive role. The battle was ultimately lost, and colorful tent cities were slowly demolished amid dwindling public support.

The crackdown came later, in the form of death by a thousand cuts. The disappearance of five booksellers in 2015, known for peddling salacious texts about the Communist Party, sounded the first alarm. Several young activists elected to public office the following year were disqualified because the way they said their oaths was deemed "insincere." (Some refused to pledge allegiance to China and used offensive language.) Not long after that, ringleaders of the protests—including Wong—were dealt prison sentences and labeled internationally as Hong Kong's first prisoners of conscience. In retrospect, there's a sense among the city's democrats that the kids were right all along, but that not enough people believed them when they warned of a slide toward authoritarianism.

Since then, the erosion of the city's freedoms has sped up. Members of the pro-democratic camp have warned of the patient and insidious takeover of political mechanisms by the United Front, a coalition of political parties tasked with exporting the Communist Party's agenda. Trade unions and influential professional associations are stacked with Beijing-friendly executives, often through coercive methods. Mainland conglomerates have bought up publishing houses and distributors, choking out banned content that used to be freely available in bookshops at the airport and throughout the city.

In September 2018, a political party that advocated for independence, the Hong Kong National Party, was banned and a *Financial Times* journalist denied a visa after appearing at a press club event with its leader.

"There was never before this sense that there were sensitive topics you couldn't talk about publicly, or write freely and publish about," says Antony Dapiran, a lawyer and author of the book *City of Protest: A Recent History of Dissent in Hong Kong*. Only a few years

*A protester throws a live tear-gas canister back at riot police during a protest near Tsim Sha Tsui police station in Kowloon*


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ago, he says, "even open criticism of the central government was considered fair game."

Fears exploded into public view on June 9, when an estimated 1 million people joined the first in a series of protests against a bill that would allow the extradition of fugitives to the mainland, where justice is notoriously opaque. Within a week, public outcry forced the government to suspend the legislation. But Lam's refusal to fully withdraw it, coupled with allegations of police brutality, triggered an even bigger outburst; organizers say some 2 million people marched the very next day.

Then came July 1 and the act of resistance that heralded a weekly routine of worsening unrest. The peaceful marches now typically descend into violence by nightfall, when authorities arrive. A few of the more radical demonstrators have started fires in front of police buildings, thrown bricks at officers and into their homes, and launched projectiles like Molotov cocktails and handcrafted spears. Increasingly, protesters have come under attack by mobs carrying sticks and other weapons, believed to be hired thugs associated with triads, or criminal gangs. Police, who are not required to wear identification on the premise that a few were unmasked and harassed on the Internet, have been documented using excessive force against mostly peaceful protesters.

Inside the glass skyscrapers that cluster the Hong Kong skyline, the business community is hoping the city's financial integrity won't suffer from this summer of discontent. But a drop in tourism has already done considerable damage to luxury retailers and the service industry, while uncertainty over political instability—compounded by the U.S.-China trade war—has some investors spooked. The Hong Kong Stock Exchange, one of the largest in the world, has dropped to its lowest point since January on major indexes. Tara Joseph, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, called on the government to do more to maintain investor confidence: "The next two months are absolutely crucial and could be make or break for Hong Kong."

Hong Kong's moderates, meanwhile, have pleaded with the protesters to temper their activity, advocating for a gradual adjustment to the inevitability of Chinese authority. "We have to look at Hong Kong as a part of the People's Republic of China, which happens to be governed by the Communist Party," says Christine Loh, a former legislator and Under Secretary for the Environment. "That's a reality check that many people seem not to want to deal with."

Authorities initially appeared to be waiting out the protests in hopes they would lose momentum. But each week is now bookended by more violent clashes. Hundreds of activists have been arrested and scores charged with rioting, which carries a sentence of up to 10 years in prison. Farcical amounts of tear gas—nearly 2,000 rounds over the course of a few weeks—have been deployed as authorities test more hazardous weapons like water cannons. "It's like they're using more crazy methods just to make us stop," a 21-year-old protester, using the nickname Kevin, tells TIME on a downtown street still clouded with the nauseating smoke. "That's what they do in China, they'll do anything to make you shut up."

Leung is no longer with them. Six weeks after his face was captured on camera calling for an occupation, he has left the territory and doesn't know if he'll ever come back. "My utmost intention is to finish my studies, go back and contribute to Hong Kong," he says. "That is my hope, but I have to consider my options."

**IF THE VIEW** from Hong Kong is one of impending doom, the view from mainland China has been one of irritation. China is a nation of 1.4 billion people, and Hong Kong no longer a key portal. Its residents are seen as spoiled and disloyal, the problem as distant and isolated. Beijing is seasoned in dealing with what it sees as "troublemakers" agitating for democratic change, discrediting opposition and leveraging nationalist sentiment to vilify them as enemies of the state. As happened to the Buddhist leader of Tibet, the Communist Party has tried to make interacting with Joshua Wong "toxic" in other countries, according to Jeffrey Wasserstrom, a historian of modern China at the University of California, Irvine. "That's right out of the international playbook that Beijing has used with the Dalai Lama," he says.

Yet the signs of Beijing's growing impatience are hard to miss. Having initially blacked out news of the protests, China is now spreading misinformation freely. Manipulated images disseminated through state-controlled press and on strictly censored domestic social-media platforms like Weibo portray the protesters as violent rioters. The Chinese government has also cast the crisis as a product of meddlesome "foreign forces," claiming the U.S. conspired with "secessionists" to undermine the state.

In mid-August, warnings from the mainland became more severe. The Chinese government's top official in Hong Kong, Yang Guang, warned that the unrest has "started to show signs of terrorism." If disruptions continue to escalate,

*An antigovernment protester is arrested near Tsim Sha Tsui police station*

the Hong Kong government, which by design is Beijing-approved, can call on the People's Liberation Army to help maintain "public order"; China has as many as 10,000 troops permanently garrisoned on Hong Kong Island, while satellite imagery appears to show military vehicles amassed at a sports complex in Shenzhen. Rumors of police speaking Mandarin, instead of the Cantonese more common in Hong Kong, fuel speculation that the dam has already been breached.

The crisis has become a test of Xi's willingness to show restraint and abide by global norms. What is unfolding in Hong Kong is the largest, most visible repudiation of Beijing since the pro-democracy rallies at Tiananmen Square in 1989, which ended in a state-sanctioned massacre of unarmed activists. Few believe a repeat of that event is likely; slow economic growth and a bruising trade war could give Beijing pause before creating a similar spectacle that, even amid a fractured global order, might launch it back into pariah status.

But a less bloody crackdown might still be an option. Xi will have weighed the limp international response to China's treatment of Uighur and other Muslim minorities in the western province of Xinjiang, where more than a million are believed to be detained in concentration camps. U.S. officials say they would not expect a strong response from the White House in the event of a violent confrontation. Sources close to the Administration say the risk of intervention by Chinese paramilitary police, possibly even the army, has risen significantly in recent days, but there has been no substantive discussion about how Washington might respond.

Trump has so far taken a hands-off approach, refusing to criticize Beijing while in the midst of trade negotiations. "I hope it works out for everybody including China," he told reporters on Aug. 13. "I hope it works out peacefully, nobody gets hurt, nobody gets killed." Lawmakers across the political spectrum, including Democratic presidential hopeful Senator Elizabeth Warren and Republican Senator Marco Rubio, have more vocally backed the protesters, in keeping with the long-standing tradition of U.S. support for democratic movements and autonomy in the territory.

The city's attempt to resist Xi's project should sound a bellwether for the wider world, pro-democracy figures say. "Hong Kong is the only place in China that is still capable of speaking out against Beijing, and the world should really think about our value as a check on China's power," says Bonnie Leung Wing-man, a district councillor who, as a leader of a pro-democratic coalition called the Civil Human Rights Front, has been at the forefront of the protests since they began. "When you do business with China, when you sign a contract with them, can you trust their terms?"

For Hong Kong's youth, in particular, trust seems more distant than ever before. Lam's stubborn retreat from the public has pushed her deeper into Beijing's corner. Each new confrontation drives the wedge further between the government and its critics, and there's a growing sense the gap is now too wide to bridge. "This is our last resort," says Sav, 24, by day a student pilot and by night a masked activist. The airport is her home away from home, but she supports the occupation of the transit hub. "If the government doesn't want to protect Hong Kong, then why are they even here?" she asks, rattling off a list of officials she wants to see resign. "I don't think this will end easily." —*With reporting by* AMY GUNIA/HONG KONG, CHARLIE CAMPBELL/SHANGHAI, MADELINE ROACHE/LONDON *and* JOHN WALCOTT/WASHINGTON

# WELCOME, COMRADES

A Kremlin-linked firm invested millions in Kentucky. Were they after more than money?

BY SIMON SHUSTER/LONDON AND VERA BERGENGRUEN/ASHLAND, KY.

*An idled blast furnace in Ashland, Ky., where Russian money is behind a new aluminum plant*

PHOTOGRAPH BY LUKE SHARRETT FOR TIME

# Last summer, it looked like things were finally about to change for Ashland, Ky.

For two decades, the jobs that once supported this Appalachian outpost of 20,000 people on a bend in the Ohio River have been disappearing: 100 laid off from the freight-rail maintenance shop; dozens pink-slipped at the oil refinery; 1,100 axed at the steel mill that looms over the landscape. Then, on June 1, 2018, standing on a stage flanked by the state's governor and business leaders, Craig Bouchard, the CEO of Braidy Industries, pointed across a vast green field and described a vision as though he could already see it.

In the little-used park just off I-64, Braidy would build the largest aluminum mill constructed in the U.S. in nearly four decades. The $1.7 billion plant would take aluminum slab and roll it into the material used in everything from cars and planes to soda cans. It would employ 600 full-time workers earning twice the average salary in the region, Bouchard said, and create 18,000 other jobs across the state. Gesturing at the empty space around him, the CEO described an employee health center, a technical lab, a day care and hundreds of employees walking around "carrying iPads." More than just making aluminum, the plant would help "rebuild northeast Kentucky, and in fact all of Appalachia," Bouchard told the crowd.

There was just one problem: Bouchard still needed a major investor to make the vision a reality. After months of searching, the only option was problematic. Rusal, the Russian aluminum giant, was tailor-made to join forces on the project. But it was under sanctions imposed by the U.S. Treasury Department. Its billionaire owner, Oleg Deripaska, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin's, was being investigated by special counsel Robert Mueller for his potential involvement in the effort to swing the 2016 presidential election. The Treasury sanctions—punishment for the Kremlin's "malign activities" around the world, including "attempting to subvert Western democracies"—made it illegal for Americans to do business with Rusal or its boss.

So Bouchard faced a dilemma. Keeping his promise to bring good new jobs—a project that had already been touted by the White House—would mean partnering with a firm that had deep ties to the Kremlin. Which mattered more, the economic needs of a depressed region or the national-security concerns raised by the Mueller investigation? Hundreds of miles from the congressional hearings and think-tank debates over Russian influence in Washington, Braidy Industries and the surrounding community had to weigh whether Russia's 2016 plot had caused enough damage to American security, or American pride, to spurn a chance at an economic miracle.

Bouchard concluded they had no choice. He knew it could be controversial, if not outright illegal, to work on a deal with Rusal while it was still fighting to free itself from U.S. sanctions, he told TIME in an interview. But after a long talk with his lawyers about the risks of even discussing such a partnership, he traveled to Zurich in January 2019 for what he calls a "meet and greet" with a Rusal sales executive. Over dinner at La Rôtisserie, a restaurant with a view of the city's 12th century cathedral, the executive told Bouchard the company was ready to do business. "They said, 'If we get the sanctions off, let's meet again,'" he recalls. "And I said, 'Wow, that's interesting.'"

By mid-April, an exuberant Bouchard was standing at the New York Stock Exchange, announcing the Russian company had purchased a 40% stake in the Ashland plant for $200 million. Back in Kentucky, the news was met with celebration and relief. "People who were skeptical are seeing that it's big time," says Chris Jackson, a 42-year-old former steel-mill worker. When he enrolled in a training program for the Braidy plant, Jackson recalls, many in the community doubted the jobs would ever materialize. "The Rusal agreement just showed everybody this is legit."

But to some observers, the story of how a Kremlin-linked aluminum giant offered an economic lifeline to Appalachia is an object lesson of the exact opposite. Critics of the deal, both Democratic and Republican, say it gives Moscow political influence that could undermine national security. Pointing to Moscow's use


JOHN FLAVELL

*Ground is broken for the new Braidy aluminum plant on June 1, 2018*

of economic leverage to sway European politics, they warn the deal is a stalking horse for a new kind of Russian meddling in America, one that exploits the U.S. free-market system instead of its elections. "That's just what the Russians do," says Daniel Fried, a veteran diplomat who shaped U.S. policy on Eastern Europe at the State Department from the late 1980s until 2017. "They insert themselves into a foreign economy and then start to influence its politics from the inside."

What worries national-security experts is not that Rusal, Braidy or Deripaska broke any laws in the deal. It's that they didn't. A TIME investigation found that Rusal used a broad array of political and economic tools to fight the sanctions, establishing a foothold in U.S. politics in the process. "You cannot go against them in a policy decision, even though it's in our national interest, when they have infiltrated you economically," says Heather Conley, who served as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State under President George W. Bush. "They use our laws, our rules, our banks, our lawyers, our lobbyists—it's a strategy from within."

To free itself from sanctions, Rusal fielded a team of high-paid lobbyists for an intense, months-long effort in Washington. One of the targets was Kentucky's own Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, who helped thwart a bipartisan push to keep the sanctions in place. Since May, two of McConnell's former staffers have lobbied Congress on behalf of Braidy, according to filings. Ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, one of Rusal's longtime major shareholders, Len Blavatnik, also contributed more than $1 million through his companies to a GOP campaign fund tied to McConnell.

Deripaska denies he has interest in meddling in U.S. affairs. "If they didn't touch me, I wouldn't have to be so interested in U.S. politics," he told TIME in February after attending a panel with U.S. lawmakers in Munich. "But here I am," he added with a smile.

Backers of the deal say its critics are playing politics or being paranoid. The U.S. benefits from economic ties to foreign powers, they say, as long as everyone plays by our rules. McConnell, who declined an interview with TIME, told reporters in May that his position on Rusal was "completely unrelated to anything that might happen in my home state." Blavatnik's company, Access Industries, told TIME his donations to both Democrats and Republicans over the years were driven "only by a desire to further a pro-business, pro-Israel agenda," not a pro-Russia one. Rusal says its motives are purely financial. "Rusal keeps out of politics in all its markets," the company told TIME. Industry experts agree that apart from any political dividends, the plant in Kentucky will likely reap significant profits for its owners.

Since taking office, President Donald Trump's Administration has tightened the rules on foreign investments that could pose a threat to national security. But in Ashland, as at the White House, few people want to see the deal undone. In the hilly towns around Ashland and Greenup, the nexus between Rusal, Braidy and national security matters little next to the jobs the deal would bring. Some 11,000 people have already applied to work at the future mill, according to Braidy.

In the end, one of the lessons of the pact may be that the U.S. has its hands tied when it comes to this brand of Russian influence. Fighting back would cost jobs that Americans need. Deripaska, who personally remains under sanctions, is glad to point out the dilemma. As he put it to TIME in February, "By hitting us, you hit yourselves."

**BACK WHEN BOUCHARD** and Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin broke ground in June 2018, they shared a bottle of Korbel and plenty of optimism. That October, Trump touted the new aluminum mill at a rally at Eastern Kentucky University, heralding it as a symbol of blue collar revival. In Ashland, locals praised Bouchard's commitment to the region, pointing to his investments in scholarships and promises of playground equipment for local schools. In an area struggling with the twin crises of job losses and the opioid epidemic, the tall, genial CEO with a contagious grin has embraced an image of economic savior. When he walks around Ashland, Bouchard says, "Middle-aged women will just come up to me crying and hug me."

Some in the region literally banked their futures on the mill. More than 100 people, many of them middle-aged

workers laid off from local steel and railroad companies, shelled out $15,000 for a two-year degree at a Braidy-partnered community college, spurred by the prospect of a job at the new plant. "You can finally see the gleam of hope in people's eyes," says Judge Executive Robert Carpenter, the top elected official in Greenup County. "I go to sleep every night with a smile on my face about it."

But by late fall of 2018, doubt had crept in. At the plant's future site, fading BRAIDY DRIVEN banners from the ground breaking were the only sign of the economic renaissance Bouchard had promised. Company filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission showed Braidy was still hundreds of millions of dollars short. Local newspapers began to question the project. Bouchard's Facebook page became a community message board of sorts, where hundreds of commenters divided themselves into cheerleaders or "nay-sayers" who pressed him for answers. "A lot of people in this area had lost hope," recalls Justin Turner, a 26-year-old father of two who enrolled in the community-college program in hopes of landing a job at Braidy.

Bouchard felt the pressure. He grew desperate enough to accept help from just about anyone, he told TIME. "If they're running a whorehouse, I wouldn't say yes," he says. "But literally any upstanding businessman from any country, any nationality, any religion, I'd welcome them. Help me rebuild Appalachia."

It's not that Bouchard didn't know the risks involved in working with Russian billionaires. In 2008, he and his younger brother, Jim, sold their U.S. steel assets to a firm controlled by Alexey Mordashov, a Russian metals tycoon, in a transaction valued at around $775 million at the time. While the deal helped make them wealthy, it also deepened Bouchard's concern over the role of Russian oligarchs in strategic U.S. industries. The next year, he co-authored a book titled *America for Sale,* which warned that foreign investors pose a threat to America's economic and national security. "[If] Putin harbors a nasty wish to throw a wrench into the works of the U.S. economy, then he now has acquired the means to do so," Bouchard wrote. When it comes to industries vital to defense, like steel and aluminum, "the bottom line is that we believe it is risky business to trust Russian oligarchs," the book concluded.

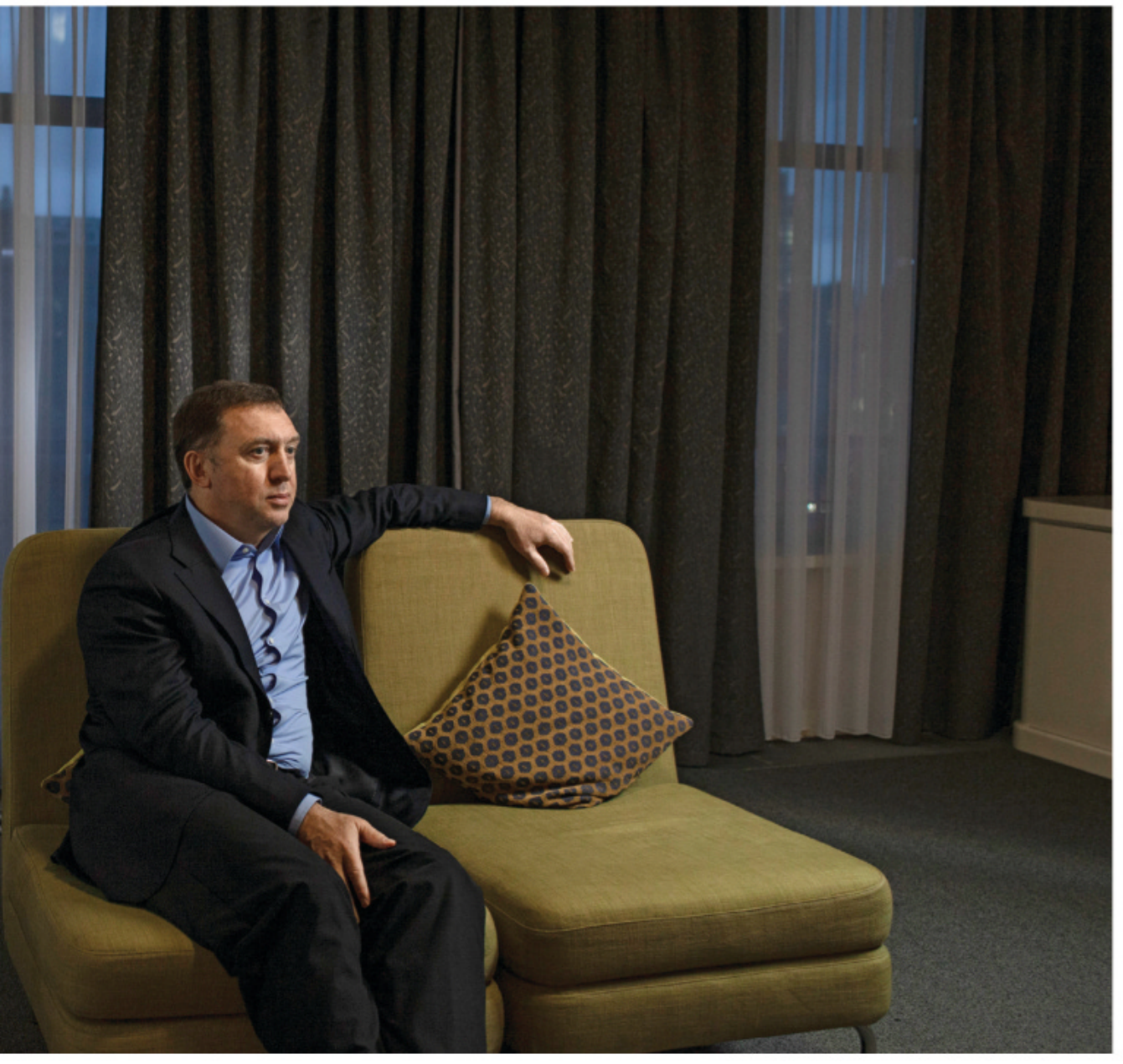
**TEN YEARS ON,** Bouchard's warning looms over the deal he cut in Kentucky. As Europe's largest aluminum producer, Rusal employs more than 60,000 people in 13 countries. "The company is indispensable," says Jorge Vazquez, head of Harbor Aluminum, a market-intelligence firm. Rusal even had a green story to tell: its smelters in Siberia run on hydropower, so it pollutes less than most rivals.

But the company has a troubled past. In the 1990s, an array of mobsters, oligarchs and corrupt officials fought a bloody turf war for control of the aluminum assets privatized by the Russian state. Deripaska emerged from the struggle victorious. Still in his early 30s, he managed to consolidate Russia's key aluminum assets and form Rusal in 2000. He developed close ties with the Kremlin, becoming a "more or less permanent fixture on Putin's trips abroad," a 2006 U.S. embassy cable reported. The cable, later published by WikiLeaks, describes him as "among the 2-3 oligarchs Putin turns to on a regular basis."

As his empire grew, Deripaska enlisted U.S. lobbyists to support his interests. Among them was GOP political operator Paul Manafort, who offered Deripaska a lobbying strategy he said would benefit "the Putin Government," according to the Mueller report. Manafort and Deripaska fell out in 2009 over unpaid debts. But in the summer of 2016, Manafort became the chairman of the Trump campaign. "He owed us a lot of money," one of Deripaska's close aides, the former Russian intelligence officer Victor Boyarkin, told TIME in 2018. "And he was offering ways to pay it back." Through intermediaries, Manafort sent Deripaska internal polling data and offered "private briefings" about the campaign, according to Mueller. As the special counsel investigated their relationship, the Treasury Department announced sanctions against Deripaska and Rusal in April 2018. In explaining the decision to sanction Deripaska, the department cited allegations that he had, among other alleged offenses, "bribed a government official, ordered the murder of a businessman and had links to a Russian organized crime group." Deripaska has denied these accusations as "groundless, ridiculous and absurd." In a lawsuit filed in March in the District of Columbia, he accused the Treasury Department of "irrationality" for relying on such claims, which his lawyers said "originate from decades-old defamatory attacks by Deripaska's business competitors."

> What worries national-security experts is not that Rusal, Braidy or Deripaska broke any laws. It's that they didn't

The announcement of sanctions sent ripples through the global economy. As companies scrambled to find new suppliers, aluminum prices surged 12% in a week, the largest increase since the 1980s. Deripaska claims he lost more than 80% of his net worth, or around $7.5 billion. The ensuing turmoil in the metals market helped Rusal fight back, as major corporations and European governments urged the U.S. to ease sanctions on the firm. "The U.S. government had some leverage, but Deripaska had leverage too," says Joshua Kirschenbaum, a former sanctions official at Treasury. "It turned into a game of chicken."



EMILE DUCKE—THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

*Deripaska, founder of the Russian aluminum giant Rusal, in a Moscow hotel suite on March 27, 2019*

**THE MAN IN CHARGE** of lobbying against the sanctions was Lord Gregory Barker of Battle, a British aristocrat. Even while serving in the House of Lords, Barker had agreed in 2017 to chair Deripaska's conglomerate. Soon it fell to the former U.K. Minister for Energy and Climate Change to draft a strategy to free Rusal from sanctions by distancing the company from its owner. Dubbed the Barker Plan, it enlisted the bipartisan U.S. lobbying firm Mercury Public Affairs to help win over Washington, at a fee of $108,500 per month, according to filings.

Mercury handed the assignment to a team of D.C. insiders that included former GOP Senator David Vitter and former Trump campaign aide Bryan Lanza. (Barker, Lanza and Vitter declined interview requests from TIME.) In marathon talks with the Treasury Department, the lobbyists argued the U.S. had made a mistake in going after Rusal, former Treasury officials say. Allies in Europe agreed. Ambassadors from Germany, France, the U.K. and other E.U. states urged U.S. officials to ease the sanctions on Rusal and its parent company. They argued in a January 2019 letter to Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer that "the livelihoods of 75,000 workers across the European Union" depend on it. "The sanctions hurt everyone," Deripaska wrote in an email to TIME on Aug. 13.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin came around to this logic. Ahead of G-20 meetings in July 2018, he told Reuters the goal was "not to put Rusal out of business." So Rusal dangled a deal, offering to "permanently remove" Deripaska's control over the firm by lowering his ownership stake to less than 50%, according to documents reviewed by TIME. After some discussions, Deripaska's stake in Rusal's parent company was reduced from 70% to 45%, with some of the difference going to family members and professional associates. A few days before Christmas, the Trump Administration announced it intended to lift the sanctions.

To some experts, it was a logical end to the face-off. "It was a reasonable deal," says Brian O'Toole, a former sanctions expert at the Treasury Department under President Obama, "because the collateral damage of keeping that company under sanctions was so dramatic." Under the deal to lift sanctions on Rusal, Deripaska, his family and his close associates are also barred from using their shares to influence the company or to benefit from it.

But opponents of the deal say it's laughable to believe Deripaska's influence is really gone. "Ownership is the wrong test," says Senator Mark Warner, a Virginia Democrat, arguing that Deripaska maintains influence over Rusal. Led by Schumer, Senators from both parties moved to block Treasury from lifting the sanctions. Yet Rusal had a powerful ally in McConnell, who backed Treasury's move.

In recent weeks, McConnell has been taunted by protesters in Washington, on social media and back home, who have labeled him "Moscow Mitch" for his refusal to bring election-security legislation to a vote. It's a moniker that has stuck in Kentucky, where Democrats started selling JUST SAY NYET TO MOSCOW MITCH merchandise, including Cossack hats. McConnell has slammed critics and the media for "modern-day McCarthyism" and says his record proves he has been tough on Russia.

Critics also seized on McConnell's links to Blavatnik, a dual U.S. and U.K. citizen who is one of Rusal's biggest shareholders. Born in the Soviet Union and naturalized in the U.S. in 1984, he earned most of his fortune, estimated by *Forbes* at $16.5 billion, as a partner to Deripaska and other Russian oil and metals tycoons. His family has donated to both Republicans and Democrats. But in recent years, his companies have been especially generous to the GOP. Those contributions have since included a total of $3.5 million to the Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC run by McConnell's former chief of staff, according to Federal Election Commission data. The money helped Republicans keep control of the Senate in the 2018 elections, securing McConnell's perch as majority leader.

In a Jan. 15 floor speech, McConnell insisted the deal with Treasury "would continue limiting" Deripaska's influence over Rusal and noted that Treasury could reimpose sanctions at any time. The Senate vote on Rusal came the next day. Eleven Republicans joined 46 Democrats in voting to uphold the sanctions, but it wasn't enough. The critics needed a 60-vote supermajority to override the Trump Administration but fell short by

three votes—two of which were cast by McConnell and Kentucky's Republican junior Senator, Rand Paul. The following day, 136 House Republicans broke ranks and joined House Democrats to oppose lifting sanctions, a rare but symbolic rebuke.

Ten days later, the sanctions on Rusal were formally lifted. Eleven weeks after that, Rusal announced its deal with Braidy.

**A MONTH** after the sanctions were lifted, one of Rusal's U.S-based executives, Andrey Donets, arrived in Ashland with three of his colleagues. They spent two days discussing strategies, touring schools, dining at the local country club and meeting community leaders. At the end of their trip, Bouchard pulled out some Kentucky bourbon, poured it into plastic cups and raised a toast. "In what we do, you dream big," he recalls telling his new partners. "Or you go home."

Bouchard remains buoyant about the deal. In interviews with TIME, he said the U.S. has nothing to worry about. The new aluminum plant will serve civilian customers, carmakers and the food-and-beverage industry, he says. (Braidy has said its metal alloy technology could have "defense applications" in the future.) Few in Kentucky are focused on geostrategic concerns. "Rusal is a company. It's not a country," says Carpenter, the judge executive in Greenup County. "That kind of an investment, I don't care who it's with."

But not everyone in Kentucky was excited about the Russians' arrival. After Donets' visit, a red billboard funded by a liberal group was erected on a busy stretch of I-75: RUSSIAN MOB MONEY … REALLY, MITCH? "The only reason Oleg is here is because Mitch McConnell opened the gate," says Representative Kelly Flood, a Democrat from Lexington. "We are now all aligned with this criminal." The deal created unease among some Republicans too. "I would not have taken the Russian money," James Comer, the GOP Congressman representing Kentucky's First District, said on the day the partnership was announced.

Yet even critics of the deal were leery of the fallout from killing it. In 2017, Governor Bevin had cut an unusual agreement in which the state directly invested $15 million in the new aluminum mill. At least 750 investors, most from Kentucky, put in money as part of the "crowdfunding" portion of Braidy's common stock offering, Bouchard said. In effect, Kentucky taxpayers were partners in the project. "To pull out as a state now is to pull out on the people of Ashland," says Flood.

Other Western democracies have learned that such bonds can carry consequences. Oligarch-owned companies have helped the Kremlin influence politics across Europe. Since Putin came to power in 2000, Russia has used economic leverage to "force a change in policy" or undermine governments in at least 19 European countries, Laura Rosenberger, a former National Security Council official under Obama, told a House committee in May.

On rare occasions, Russian oligarchs have even described how this strategy works. "What is a factory in a one-factory town? It's what all life revolves around," the billionaire Dmitry Firtash, a longtime ally of the Kremlin in Ukraine, told TIME in a 2017 interview. "We don't just pay wages. We provide the social safety net. So people believe us." When he and his factories put their support behind a political cause or candidate, "that influences people," Firtash explained. "That's what ensures electoral support."

Only in the context of the Mueller investigation have U.S. policymakers begun to worry whether the tools of economic influence that Russia honed in Europe could work just as well in American politics. Russia's direct investments in the U.S. amounted to less than $4 billion in 2018—a relatively minor sum—although its billionaires have long had an outsize presence in some industries, including the tech sector. "The Obama Administration was slow in general to recognize the problem," says Fried, the former State Department official. "We've come to realize we're not so special in that regard. We're just targets like everybody else."

The fight is not over in Washington. Treasury "needs to take potential harm to national security from Rusal's proposed investment seriously," Oregon Senator Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Senate Committee on Finance, said in an Aug. 11 statement to TIME. Wyden has been pushing for a review of the deal. Other Democrats say that if Rusal is banking on its investment in American jobs to protect it from future sanctions, that highlights a bigger problem. "The situation with Rusal broadly raises concerns that entities may in effect be 'too big to sanction' given the interconnectedness of the global economy," says a Senate Democratic aide.

> Oligarch-owned companies have helped the Kremlin influence politics across Europe

It's not as if the U.S. has no protections against malign foreign investment. But thanks to a regulatory loophole, the Rusal-Braidy deal skated past the agency that vets foreign investments for threats to national security. According to the mandate of the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), the agency does not investigate so-called greenfield projects, which are built from the ground up. And brand-new plants like the one in Ashland might just fit through that loophole, says Aimen Mir, who ran the agency for four years until 2018. As a general rule, he tells TIME, the agency tries to keep the U.S. as open as possible to legitimate foreign capital. "All other things being equal," Mir says, "we should be welcoming of investment."

That attitude has begun to shift under the Trump Administration. Through legislation passed last summer, CFIUS will get expanded powers to collect data on foreign investments and block the ones it deems to be a threat. In April, the agency pressured the Russian billionaire Mikhail Fridman to sell his fund's stake in a U.S. cybersecurity firm, Cofense Inc.

Those powers may soon be tested, because there are signs Rusal is not done investing in the U.S. Soon after the Kentucky deal was announced, Lord Barker sent a letter to the governors of eight more U.S. states. In the April 18 note, he touted the benefits of the Rusal investment and said the company was "eager to evaluate other opportunities around the country and your state in particular."

To critics of Russian economic influence, the letter sounded one particularly ominous chord. "As part of our international growth strategy, we see significant opportunities across the whole industry value chain in North America," Barker wrote. The investment in Kentucky, he added, "is just the beginning of our long-term ambitions." —*With reporting from* ALANA ABRAMSON/WASHINGTON

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# WHOSE COUNTRY?

## THE DISTINCTIVE AMERICAN MUSIC HAS ALWAYS REFLECTED THE COMPLICATED LIVES OF THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT

BY JON MEACHAM AND TIM MCGRAW

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRENT HUMPHREYS

HE WAS FALLING APART. BRILLIANT AND TORtured, devout and driven, Johnny Cash had been discovered in the Memphis of Sun Records—the musical milieu that gave America Elvis Presley—and had built a career that, by the late 1960s, he seemed determined to destroy through an addiction to pills. Lost in a fog of speed and drink, Cash missed shows and was exiled from the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville after he kicked out the footlights of the stage at the fabled Ryman Auditorium. His first marriage in tatters, Cash was in love with June Carter, of country music's iconic Carter Family, but June refused to marry him until he sobered up. At last, June and her parents isolated Cash at his house near Nashville to dry him out and get him right.

After white-knuckling his way to sobriety, Cash accepted a January 1968 gig at Folsom State Prison in California, the setting for his legendary "Folsom Prison Blues." "I knew this was it," Cash recalled, "my chance to make up for all the times I messed up." The men in the audience had suffered too, and Cash's voice and experience formed an inherent connection between singer and convict. "The same guy who sang, 'I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die' sang 'Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?'—in the same show," Cash's daughter Rosanne said. His music, like his life, was complex and contradictory.

As is America, which has always been the source material for the sound we know as country music. That point is a running theme of Ken Burns' illuminating and engrossing new documentary, *Country Music,* which premieres Sept. 15 on PBS. Arguably the most influential interpreter of American history of the past three decades, Burns tells the story of the genre in his trademark style and, in so doing, makes it gracefully and implicitly clear that country music reflects not just red America but blue America too.

The music's roots lie partly in the 1920s, a period like our own—with massive shifts in the economy, culture, population and media dividing the country into those who embraced the future and those who clung to the past. Tellingly, country music was marketed as a nostalgic product from the beginning—so-called old-time music even though it was quite new.

Such reminders are helpful at a moment when


★
**JOHNNY CASH**
*The Man in Black, seen performing at the White House in 1970, embodied country's complexity*

★
**LORETTA LYNN**
*Lynn, who in 1970 became the only woman ever named ACM Artist of the Decade, never shied from controversial material*

★
**DOLLY PARTON**
*A nine-time Grammy winner, Parton is one of only a few women in country to achieve commercial success on a par with that of male artists*

country is in the midst of a renewed debate over the nature of its sound and the related question of who counts as part of its club. Thanks to the success of hip-hop-inflected hits from Blanco Brown and Lil Nas X—whose "Old Town Road" has spent a record 19 weeks atop the *Billboard* charts—and the genre-bending performers Miranda Lambert and Maren Morris, the industry is undergoing a period of healthy redefinition and soul searching. In some ways, these questions are not so different from the ones the broader nation is asking itself in the age of Trump.

So, what is country? Or to put it more plainly, can a historically white ethos (in Burns' film, Kris Kristofferson calls country "probably the white man's soul music") make room for the voices and visions of an increasingly diverse America? The answer, much like the music itself, is more complicated than even its fans tend to realize.

**DEBATING WHAT IS COUNTRY** is a tradition nearly as old as country itself. In 1975, Waylon Jennings wrote "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way," which lamented the trend away from the kind of music Hank Williams created and toward a more polished, commercial sound. Charlie Rich would be banned from the now prime-time telecast CMA Awards for burning the envelope that declared pop superstar John Denver country music's entertainer of the year, as he did in 1975. Whenever a generation puts less emphasis on the bedrock sounds of fiddle, acoustic guitar and steel guitar, the argument begins anew.

Country came not from the affluent and the accepted, but from the fringes of America—from the hills and hollows, from Sunday morning and Saturday night, from barrios and blues clubs. In Georgia in the 1920s—the state where a new Ku Klux Klan had been founded in 1915—"Fiddlin' John" Carson gained popularity, his music resonating in a country that was rapidly urbanizing. Even people who had known only city life liked to indulge in reminiscence about simpler times.

"Country music is full of songs about little old log cabins that people have never lived in; the old country church that people have never attended," the historian Bill C. Malone says in *Country Music*. "But it spoke for a lot of people who were being forgotten, or felt they were being forgotten."

One songwriter defined country music as "three chords and the truth," but the editor of *Variety* in 1926 called country people "illiterate and ignorant … poor white trash … with the intelligence of morons." Burns' film, however, shows that the music and its makers and promoters were anything but ignorant or moronic—and they certainly weren't simple. Carson, for instance, benefited from the rise of radio as a mass medium: WSB in Atlanta (call letters that stood for Welcome South, Brother) put him on the air, and together with a growing market for phonographic records, the twin technologies helped fuel the creation of what became known as the music business.

There it all was, even in the beginning: nostalgia and newness, sentiment and sales. Ralph Peer was a successful producer of what were called "race records" when he noticed Carson's appeal. Before long, Peer had discovered both the Carter Family singers and Jimmie Rodgers, whom he recorded in a 24-hour period in Bristol, Tenn. The Carters' music was rooted in gospel, the sounds of Sunday morning; Rodgers' in the carousing world of Saturday night—thus setting up ongoing themes in a genre that touched on both redemption and sin.

Still, the ways country has been marketed from the start have obscured its other faces. Long considered the soundtrack of conservatism, country is in fact more complicated and more interesting than the prevailing caricature would have it. There's always been a strain of protest alongside the sentimental patriotism. For all of the beer-swilling "We'll put a boot in your ass/ It's the American way" lyrics—see Toby Keith's post-9/11 "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue (The Angry American)"—there's Cash defending prisoners or Native Americans and Loretta Lynn warning her man not to "come home a-drinkin' with lovin' on

your mind" and touting the virtues of "The Pill," an ode to a woman's right to her own body that became a best seller despite being banned by many top radio stations. Country is not just about breaking hearts; it can be about opening them too.

If the themes of country have been more inclusive than many realize, the makeup of those who perform it has been far too narrow. To put it mildly, racial and ethnic diversity has been the rare exception in country rather than the rule. Blues and African-American gospel was an essential tributary for the genre as a whole, and there were early black musicians who played important roles. But pioneers like DeFord Bailey and stars like Charley Pride have long been a rarity in a field dominated by white men. The irony is thick: one of the greatest country songs in history, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?," began as an African-American spiritual.

There have been moments when it appeared the doors were opening wider. In the early 1960s, Ray Charles had a huge hit with his album *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music,* which featured covers of country classics such as Hank Williams' "Hey Good Lookin'," the Everly Brothers' "Bye Bye Love" and Don Gibson's "I Can't Stop Loving You." As Willie Nelson put it, the pianist better known for rhythm and blues "did more for country music than any one artist has ever done." Charles himself offered the longest of views. "You take country music, you take black music," he said, and "you got the same goddamn thing exactly."

More than half a century later, the rise of Lil Nas X and Blanco Brown offers a hopeful sign that in a world where all lines are blurring, broad audience acceptance of artists of color may be the next big front in country.

Perhaps country will also remedy the lack of commercial avenues for female artists. Despite legends like Lynn and Dolly Parton, you would be hard-pressed to find any decade where more than two or three female artists would be ranked by *Billboard* in the year-end top 10 artist rankings. The success of artists like Kacey Musgraves, who has built a major career and won multiple Grammy Awards by finding a way to connect to the fans without the filter of mainstream radio, points the way to a more equitable future.

**THINGS WILL ALWAYS BE CHANGING** in country music. That's as it should be. We can embrace tradition, and we can embrace the more current sounds of the day—this is, after all, what our musical forebears did so brilliantly. At its heart, country is the music of inclusion and universality, and there must be an open door—and open ears and hearts—for artists who don't look like Jimmie Rodgers or Hank Williams. Country is songs with stories for everyone, our life experience played out in 3½ minutes. Complexity is country's friend, not its enemy, and more people need to realize that.

That includes matters of politics. Ever since the Dixie Chicks set off a fierce backlash in 2003 on the eve of the Iraq War when they said they were "ashamed" that George W. Bush was from Texas, artists have been, perhaps understandably, skittish about directly addressing politics in their music. To be true to its roots, though, musicians, like any other citizens, need to be forever open to speaking truth when the time seems right.

In this, as in many things, Johnny Cash shows us the way. In 1970, Richard Nixon invited Cash to perform at the White House. Ambivalent about the war in Vietnam, Cash nevertheless accepted the President's offer. Then he learned that Nixon wanted him to sing "Welfare Cadillac," a song that made fun of the poor. Cash refused and performed his "What Is Truth," a meditation on the reasonableness of those questioning war and social conventions. Among the lyrics: "The old world's wakin' to a new born day"—which, to Cash, to country music broadly, and to the nation itself, is indeed an ancient and recurring truth.

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*Meacham, a Pulitzer Prize–winning historian, and McGraw, a Grammy-winning musician, are the authors of* Songs of America: Patriotism, Protest and the Music That Made a Nation

★ **RAY CHARLES**

*The legendary pianist had a huge hit with his 1962 album* Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music

★ **KACEY MUSGRAVES**

*The winner of the 2019 Album of the Year Grammy Award, Musgraves has built a following without the aid of mainstream radio*

GETTY IMAGES (5)

# OLD TOWN NEW ROAD.

## HOW 20-YEAR-OLD UPSTART LIL NAS X USED THE INTERNET TO BEAT NASHVILLE AT ITS OWN GAME

BY ANDREW R. CHOW

*Lil Nas X wrote "Old Town Road" with memes in mind: "If you see something going around the Internet, people want to join in."*

PHOTOGRAPH BY KELIA ANNE FOR TIME

LIL NAS X IS GETTING BORED. AT A BOWLING ALLEY in midtown Manhattan, he plays a giant Connect 4, then ping-pong and then, even as he checks and rechecks his phone, he races back and forth between two lanes, pins clattering in surround sound as he bowls one spare after another.

But for the 20-year-old rapper, singer and songwriter—who less than a year ago was a college dropout sleeping on his sister's floor—second best gets boring, and fast. On his next turn, in a whirl of goofy energy, he spins around, pointing his black Air Jordans away from the pins, and flicks the ball backward down the hardwood lane. Rather than sinking into the gutter, the ball rolls perfectly down the center, knocking down all 10. He collapses onto the floor, yelping and pumping his fists.

It's tempting to read this moment as a perfect metaphor for Lil Nas' career: an amateur flings something into the universe, only to luck into a massive win. When his debut single, "Old Town Road," exploded online early this year and began climbing the charts, industry prognosticators anticipated a quick rise and fall.

Four months later, "Old Town Road" has defied all expectations. It's now the longest-running No. 1 song in history, having occupied the top spot on the *Billboard* Hot 100 for 19 weeks, blocking new singles from Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber and Ed Sheeran, and dethroning the previous record holders, Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men's 1995 hit "One Sweet Day" and Luis Fonsi, Daddy Yankee and Justin Bieber's 2017 single "Despacito." It's been streamed more than a billion times on Spotify alone. As Lil Nas himself put it on Twitter: "It's crazy how any baby born after march has not lived in a world where old town road wasn't number 1."

All of this has made "Old Town Road" the defining sound of the year, a slurry, genre-busting interpolation of two quintessential American musical genres: country and hip-hop. Not coincidentally, it's a perfect meme—catchy, quick, self-referential and subversive. (Sample lyric: "Ridin' on a horse, ha/ You can whip your Porsche.") Yet it was written solely by Lil Nas X using a beat he purchased online for $30. It's weird, beguiling and inarguably fun—a tonic for these times.

A hit song doesn't need to stand for anything, of course. But the rise of Lil Nas X represents a larger moment in our culture. Phenomena that once solely existed in digital spaces—the idea of canceling someone, the contagious popularity of a nonsensical thing, the rise of influencer culture—have become a part of everyday life. "Old Town Road" is the sensibility of the Internet, which thrives on the juxtaposition of opposites, playing on your car radio and as you shop at the supermarket.

Yet even from his perch at the top of the charts, Lil Nas is still an outlier. There aren't many black stars in country music; there aren't many queer stars in hip-hop. There aren't many queer black stars in American culture, point-blank. The fact that Lil Nas has risen so far and so fast testifies not only to his skill, but also to the erosion of the systems that for generations kept artists like him on the sidelines. As streaming and social media have democratized pathways to success, hip-hop—once an outlet for disenfranchised people of color—has become the dominant sound of popular music. More and more in recent years, hip-hop has been merging with country, a genre long associated with white conservatism. All this has the people who usually make money off stars like Lil Nas X questioning long-held assumptions about who consumes what, how and when. "He's been able to break down cultural barriers as well as pre-existing notions of musical genres," Ron Perry, the chairman & CEO of Columbia Records, Lil Nas' label, tells TIME. "He has remained authentic and true to his art and this is just the beginning."

At a time when debates about categorization and identity are ubiquitous, Lil Nas X represents a more unified vision of the future, one in which a young queer black man can dominate popular culture by being unapologetically himself. "Everything lined up for this moment to take me to this place," he says now. "Not to sound self-centered, but it feels like I'm chosen, in a way, to do this stuff."

For the history of music, artists like Lil Nas were the exception. Now, by definition, Lil Nas is the rule. His critics might say he's just another flash in the pan, destined to go the way of the Macarena and the Dougie. Yet many signs point toward this as our new normal: the spirit of the Internet springs to life, then becomes the biggest pop star of the summer.

**HUGE PORTIONS** of the music industry are still run like an assembly line. Songwriters gather in camps to layer mathematical hooks over sticky beats. The formulaic results are cut by artists and sent to radio, where they climb the charts on the merits of their cross-generational appeal.

But over the past decade, the origin stories of stars have changed dramatically. Piracy, streaming and social media have reshaped the industry, allowing rising stars to find fans without the help of industry support. On digital services like the short-form video platform TikTok (previously Musical.ly) and the audio platform SoundCloud, a class of primarily hip-hop artists are racking up huge streaming numbers. Idiosyncratic interlopers like Blueface, Juice WRLD and Lil Pump have forced the music industry to incorporate a wider array of sounds and scour these digital platforms in hopes of folding these new talents into their existing system.

**'IT FEELS LIKE I'M CHOSEN, IN A WAY, TO DO THIS STUFF.'**

JOHN SHEARER— CMA/GETTY IMAGES

**BRIGHT LIGHTS**

*With Keith Urban and Billy Ray Cyrus at CMA Fest in June; Lil Nas X knew getting Cyrus on a remix would "make people go crazy"*

The music industry has always subsumed niche or local scenes—punk, grunge and hip-hop started out small before they became pop phenomena—but what used to require A&R savvy is now quantifiable by anyone. "This is the democratization of the music industry that people were hoping for when social media first became available," says Bill Werde, the director of Syracuse University's music industry program and the former editorial director of *Billboard*.

As a true digital native, Lil Nas X understands this intuitively. When he recorded "Old Town Road" last fall, he was hoping it could be his way out of an unhappy life. Born Montero Lamar Hill outside Atlanta in 1999, Lil Nas grew up poor, living with one parent or another—his mother and father split when he was 6. As he spent most of his teenage years alone, he began to live on the Internet and particularly Twitter, creating memes that showed his disarming wit and pop-culture savvy.

But while his posts earned him a devoted following online, out in the real world, his circumstances felt grim: he was in the process of dropping out of college and frequently fighting with his parents. "It was like, I'm able to go viral, but I'm not promoting anything that's gonna help me," he says. "Until music came along."

A gifted vocalist since he was a child—his father is a gospel singer—Lil Nas began writing and recording songs in his closet. When, around last Halloween, he stumbled across a banjo-driven beat by the teenage Dutch producer YoungKio, he saw an opportunity to combine trap—a Southern-born hip-hop subgenre propelled by vicious bass and crawling tempos—with country, which was experiencing a surge of popularity on the Internet. (It's been called the "Yeehaw Agenda"—picture SpongeBob Squarepants in a cowboy hat.) "Because it's two polar opposites coming together, it's funny no matter what it is," he says. Since then, he's fully embraced the country aesthetic, performing in an impressive array of brightly colored cowboy hats and fringe, portraying an old-school Western outlaw in the epic "Old Town Road" video and even designing his own line for Wrangler jeans.

**LIKE VETERAN SONGWRITERS,** Nas had studied the tropes of popular music: bold beats, catchy lyrics and short length. And like the best digital creators, he knew he had to turn that music into a movement. He estimates he made more than a hundred short videos to promote "Old Town Road," plugging it into existing memes or creating his own. "People were like, 'Where are these memes coming from?'" he says. "If you see something going around the Internet, people want to join in."

Sure enough, the song was picked up by canny online influencers, as millions of people went on to don cowboy outfits and dance to the song on TikTok. "Old Town Road"—boosted by the fact that *Billboard* now includes streaming numbers in its chart positions—began a renegade climb up the country charts.

Then something shocking happened: the song

# THE SUMMER OF LIL NAS X

**How "Old Town Road" conquered the charts**

**WEEK 1**
"Old Town Road" goes from meme to No. 1

**WEEK 2**
The Billy Ray Cyrus remix is streamed a record 143 million times

**WEEK 3**
Jimmy Fallon parodies the song on late night

**WEEK 4**
LNX performs at Stagecoach with Cyrus and Diplo


**WEEK 5**
Defeats Taylor Swift's single "ME!"

**WEEK 6**
Cameo-filled music video is released

**WEEK 7**
Beats Justin Bieber and Ed Sheeran's "I Don't Care"

**WEEK 8**
Video of kids losing it to "OTR" performance goes viral

**WEEK 9**
Stalls Billie Eilish's "Bad Guy"

was banned. In March—the same month Columbia Records signed Lil Nas—*Billboard* removed "Old Town Road" from the Hot Country songs chart, claiming it did not have enough country elements to belong there. The incident set off a furor, with many saying its exclusion echoed country music's uneasy racial history: Nashville has been dominated by white artists since the birth of country music, even though that genre has strong roots in black musical styles like blues.

Darius Rucker, front man of the hit rock band Hootie & the Blowfish, says he faced resistance because of his race when he started making country music 11 years ago. "I was doing radio tours, and one guy looked me in the eye and said, 'I love the song, but I don't think I'll play it,'" he remembers. "The perception was that the audience wouldn't accept an African-American singer."

Nashville is a notoriously territorial industry, with a long tradition of snubbing country songs that didn't originate from inside the system. A look at the Country Airplay charts—which reflects what plays on country radio stations—shows a world that favors white men singing about religion (Blake Shelton's "God's Country"), the troops (Justin Moore's "The Ones That Didn't Make It Back Home") and the genre of country music itself (Chris Young's "Raised on Country"). On that chart, "Old Town Road" stalled at No. 50: Nashville DJs stuck to their regularly scheduled programming. "It's a stupid little ditty—an earworm," says Kyle Coroneos, the founder of the website Saving Country Music. "The people inside country music aren't even paying attention to it."

Billy Ray Cyrus was. After being told that Lil Nas wanted him on a remix, he happily recorded a new verse in the wake of the song's removal. The new version shot all the way to the top of the *Billboard* Hot 100; An unprecedented 19 weeks later, it's still there.

**FOR A LOT OF REASONS,** Lil Nas didn't initially plan to come out. He had been taught from a young age that homosexuality "is never going to be O.K.," and he feared he would lose fans: "I know the people who listen to this the most, and they're not accepting of homosexuality," he says. While hip-hop stars like Frank Ocean and Tyler, the Creator have come out as queer, the spectre of homophobia still looms large.

But during Pride Month, something changed for Lil Nas. "I never would have done that if I wasn't in a way pushed by the universe," he says. "In June, I'm seeing Pride flags everywhere and seeing couples holding hands—little stuff like that."

He first came out to his father and sister earlier in June, and then broke the news on Twitter several weeks later. It was a historic moment, in no small part because of how casually he went about it: "Thought I made it obvious," he wrote on Twitter, pointing out a rainbow on his album cover. He had some haters, but they were quickly and summarily dismissed—often by him personally. (He wrote on Twitter that the next person to say something offensive would be "getting kissed.") Meanwhile, "Old Town Road" continued to rack up millions of streams, extending its run atop the Billboard Hot 100.

Now Lil Nas' playful expression of his sexuality is just another part of his self-deprecating online brand. "Last year i was sleeping on my sisters floor, had no money, struggling to get plays on my music, suffering from daily headaches, now i'm gay," he tweeted at the end of July.

"A lot of walls were taken down by this song," Cyrus says. "I think a lot of artists out there can look at this and say, 'Hey man, this is a green light.'"

It's a sweltering Friday afternoon in July, and the Twitter offices in New York have been brought to a screeching, euphoric halt. A crowd of cowboy-hat-clad employees cheer on Lil Nas as he wanders their

**WEEK 10**
Lil Nas hits a million Twitter followers

**WEEK 11**
His EP *7* is released

**WEEK 12**
Holds off Swift's "You Need to Calm Down"


**WEEK 13**
Lil Nas comes out as gay on Twitter

**WEEK 14**
Remix with Young Thug and Mason Ramsey is released

**WEEK 15**
Lil Nas gets in on the Area 51 memes with his own video

**WEEK 16**
LNX nominated for eight MTV Video Music Awards

**WEEK 17**
Breaks record for longest run as No. 1 ever

**WEEK 18**
Remix with BTS's RM boosts streams

**WEEK 19**
Follow-up single "Panini" passes 140 million streams on Spotify

halls in a purple Pyer Moss jacket and mismatched earrings, handing out pressed sandwiches, in honor of his follow-up single "Panini." Jack Dorsey, the company's CEO, jokingly gives Lil Nas his title for the day.

He's had many surreal firsts over the past few months—from performing at Glastonbury to cooking with Gordon Ramsay—but perhaps none means as much to him as this one. Twitter was his first community; the origin of his superpowers. He still regularly tweets more than 10 times a day to his 2.6 million followers, who revel in his goofy memes, shameless self-promotion and sharp cultural commentary.

If Lil Nas is nervous, he doesn't show it; he strides around the building with a rambunctious, childlike irreverence. He delights in using his custom ID to unlock the building's turnstiles, freeze-frames while leaving rooms, and unflinchingly tells Dorsey that he's fired. During a skit, Dorsey asks him if he has any questions. Lil Nas immediately deadpans: "How's your relationship with your father?"

When Lil Nas isn't engaging with another human, his mischievous energy dissipates and he's back to his phone. Lil Nas is constantly reading and responding to comments, watching videos, looking at news and laughing at memes. He admits to being "100% addicted" to his phone. (According to one study, half of Gen Z is online 10 hours a day; they admit to suffering from widespread anxiety and mental-health issues.)

Lil Nas says he's dealt with acute anxiety, and is still adjusting to the pressures of fame and nonstop in-person interaction. "It gets overwhelming," he says. "I just shut down on everybody—I'm still a loner in a lot of ways." Yet much as he needs down time, he knows he can't afford it, even if he was capable of logging off: if he doesn't keep up with the steady stream of content, the social-media world could move on to someone else without blinking.

After all, a new wave of would-be Lil Nas Xs has already arrived. Sueco the Child, a rapper whose song "Fast" went viral on TikTok in April, signed to Atlantic, while Y2K and bbno$ pushed their song "Lalala" through unconventional digital campaigns until it was snatched up by Columbia.

In June, another country-trap concoction by a black artist—Blanco Brown's "The Git Up"—sailed to the top of the country charts thanks to a TikTok meme, massive streaming numbers and this time, the approval of Nashville. According to John Marks, a former Nashville DJ who is now global head of country at Spotify, five of the top six most streamed country tracks globally the week "Old Town Road" bested the No. 1 record were by Lil Nas, while the remaining one was "The Git Up." Now, Marks says, "the same people that were saying, 'That doesn't belong on the country charts,' are now saying, 'We need to find something like it.'"

Lil Nas' seductive trap hit "Panini" already has 149 million streams on Spotify—more than the Beatles' "Help" or Madonna's "Like a Prayer." When that song has run its course, he'll release the video for "Rodeo"—another Western-tinged song that features Cardi B—and then a slew of new songs that also experiment with genre bending, Lil Nas says. He's working with bigger producers now, including Pharrell Williams.

Pop culture moves at light speed and its past is littered with one-hit wonders who were convinced, at least for a brief moment, that they ruled the world. Back at the bowling alley, Lil Nas is determined to make his success last. "Seeing digital numbers, it's a good feeling. It goes so quickly, though," he says. "You have to keep going." After celebrating that backward strike, he hops up off the floor and snatches up another ball—to try his improbable, innovative technique again. ◻

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# Time Off

**ANIMAL INSTINCTS**
**Eight years after her debut novel, *The Tiger's Wife*, landed with a roar, Téa Obreht is back—with camels**

**INSIDE**

*A POLISH MURDER MYSTERY THAT'S ALSO A FAIRY TALE*

*GROWNUP MOVIE* GOOD BOYS *SAYS THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT*

DIAGNOSIS *LOOKS BEYOND THE LIMITS OF HEALTH CARE*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GEORGE ETHEREDGE FOR TIME

BOOKS

# Téa Obreht returns to resurrect the Old West

By Belinda Luscombe

FOR SOMEONE CONVINCED THAT NOTHING LIES beyond the grave, Téa Obreht brings a lot of stuff back from the dead. The living and the unliving mingle in her books like uneasy teens at a party, half recognizing each other, uncertain of what they have in common. She's fascinated by history, particularly that which has been forgotten. And more literally, her latest book, *Inland,* contains some of the undead remains of the almost two whole books she wrote, but never finished, after her 2011 smash best seller *The Tiger's Wife.*

"I threw 1,400 pages in the trash," says Obreht, 33, sitting on an unreliable chair in the windowless room she shares with two other adjunct professors at Hunter College in New York City. For a novelist about whom TIME critic Mary Pols wrote, "Not since Zadie Smith has a young writer arrived with such power and grace," it's a remarkably modest office, just the place to talk about those discarded drafts with struggling students. "It felt like failure a lot," she says. "But then I realized it was just a different way of measuring progress, that I was opening doors and realizing there was nothing in the room and then closing those doors and continuing down the hallway."

She's phlegmatic about it now, but it must have been a little terrifying watching those years of searching tick by since she won a slew of accolades, including the prestigious Orange Prize—now known as the Women's Prize for Fiction—at the criminally young age of 25.

The book in which she eventually found a reason to tarry weaves together two narratives in Arizona at the end of the 1800s. In one, Nora Lark, a wife and mother, spends a day trying to restore order to her homestead, which is currently missing one husband, two sons and most of its water supply. It also seems to have lost its mind, since the remaining inhabitants insist that the house is being menaced by a terrifying beast. Nora believes that she alone is behaving rationally—and the dead daughter with whom she steadily converses agrees with her.

The other story, which intersects with Nora's, is told by Lurie, a wandering miscreant immigrant from Yugoslavia who's recounting his life to a friend. Perhaps because of his early childhood years spent as a grave robber, he can talk to the dead, though if he does, they deposit their deepest desires within him and he begins to want what they wanted. This may be why the friend he chooses to talk to is a particularly good listener, and also a camel.

**A NOVEL BASED** in the American West is not an obvious choice for an author born in Belgrade and raised in Cyprus, Cairo, Georgia (the American one, not the European one) and California. Nor is it an obvious follow-up to Obreht's first book, although that also wove together strands of folklore, family and fantastical bonds between the animal and human kingdoms. *The Tiger's Wife* was inspired by the death of Obreht's grandfather, the dominant male figure in her upbringing. (Her mother's marriage to her father was very brief.) *Inland,* meanwhile, was sparked by a history podcast about the Camel Corps, a short-lived experiment to introduce camels into America.

Yet the books are similar in many ways, most obviously in the fascination with death and with communion between humans and non-humans. "I remember talking to David Mitchell at a dinner many years ago, because I was in a crisis about what I was supposed to write next," says Obreht. The *Cloud Atlas* author told her that all books do three things. "There are the themes that every book is about: love, death, loyalty," she says. "Then there are the things that *this* book is about, like the American West or the Balkans. And then there are the things that every book *you* write is about. That is what he called your Whac-A-Mole themes."

Obreht is beginning to believe that humans' relationship to fauna is her chief Whac-A-Mole theme: no matter how often she hits it, it's going to pop back up. She has long been a David Attenborough megafan, after all. And she's toying with studying zoology in her downtime from writing and teaching. One of the characters in her book divides the world into "two kinds of folk: those who name their horses and those who don't." Obreht is firmly in the former category.

When she started the novel, Obreht probably had some notion that the ideas she wanted to pursue were going to be relevant for a while. The newspaper published by Nora's missing husband, which is in dire financial circumstances, is engaged in a political dustup with a rival newspaper. Each paper's publisher accuses the other of simply making up facts to fit its opinion as to where the county seat should reside. (Obreht, an enthusiastic researcher, explored the newspaper wars of the era for one of her failed drafts.) The novel is also shot through with the unexpected collateral effects of that game-changing technology, the telegraph. And over it all hovers the specter of scarce natural resources,

***Obreht had a hit with her debut novel. Some of her other firsts:***

**BOOK SHE LOVED**
*The Incredible Journey* by Sheila Burnford

**STORY SHE WROTE**
A two-paragraph tale about a goat, when she was 8

**STORY SHE PUBLISHED**
"The Laugh," about a blackout, a baby and a hyena, when she was 23

**LINE OF FIRST BOOK**
"In my earliest memory, my grandfather is bald as a stone . . ."

18+

# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?

# AVAXHOME-

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*In* Inland, *Obreht continues exploring themes, like the afterlife, woven into her first novel,* The Tiger's Wife

and the looming battle of who should get first dibs on them.

But Obreht couldn't have known that *Inland* would be released into a nation where immigration, and the question of who has a right to settle where, had become a scalding political potato. Even though, having seen much of her Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) family flee the former Yugoslavia, she's familiar with the global forces that propel people to leave home and the kind of reception with which they are often greeted.

She, her mother and her grandparents left Belgrade when she was 7, before the war had reached her city, but after the discrimination and slights directed toward her mother, whose married name was Bajraktareviec, and grandmother, who was a Bosniak married to a Slovene, began to become commonplace.

She never lived for seven years in one place again until moving to New York City as an adult. It created a resilience in her, a sense that she knew she could just stand up, stretch into a new shape and start again. She doesn't even really have a mother tongue. English is her best language, but not her first. She could quote entire English-language movies before she understood what they meant, just by learning the sounds. "Home for me has never really been tied to a sense of physical place," she says. Thus, she's fascinated by the sense of agreement her Irish husband, writer Dan Sheehan, and his old friends and family have about certain places or events, a shared wealth of fixed points from which to navigate life. "Certainty is home," she says. "This notion of feeling at home in a place, or feeling at home in a situation; it's anchored to certainty."

Although Obreht (whose grandfather asked her to use her mother's maiden name for her writing before he died) never saw the effects of war at close quarters, the traumas her homeland endured during the Bosnian War have certainly left their mark. "I fear there is no afterlife, but I really do believe in ghosts," she says. To her, it's a matter of physics; catastrophic events leave their signature. "I think places can be haunted. When horrific things happen in certain places, they are just always happening in those places in perpetuity, and you can feel the impression of it pressing down on you."

**IN THE AFTERLIFE** ecosystem she creates for *Inland,* the unfortunates who die during travesties do not get to rest, because their send-offs are all wrong. Worse, they're isolated. "Nameless and unburied, turned out suddenly in the bewildering dark," she writes of some slaughtered Native Americans, "they rose to find themselves entirely alone." The dead can see the living, but not their fellow dead. And (most of) the living can't see them.

It's a terrifying idea that reflects the feelings of its creator. "I'm very afraid of death," says Obreht. "I think I started writing seriously after my grandfather died, in part because it was the first time it hit me that actually maybe I didn't believe in an afterlife." Perhaps Obreht's belief that there is no final resting place is connected to a childhood spent on the move "from vagueness to vagueness," as she puts it. "A lot of this book ended up being about the cost of preserving our illusion of home," she says.

> ***'I fear there is no afterlife, but I really do believe in ghosts.'***
>
> TÉA OBREHT

But every book an author writes changes her, and Obreht has been altered by her time spent in the American West. Like many of the immigrants who traveled the region before her, she felt a sense of belonging when she first visited Wyoming, "which has these incredible vast plains abutted by unbelievable jagged mountains—just like out of a postcard. I really felt a very strong draw of home, whatever that meant," she says. "I felt homesick for it when I left. That was new for me." She and Sheehan recently bought a place in Wyoming, near Jackson. Obreht may never find her resting place, but for now, she at least has a place to rest. ◻

*Tokarczuk trained as a psychologist before becoming an award-winning writer*

FICTION

# Horoscopes that help solve homicides

By Annabel Gutterman

IN AN ISOLATED POLISH VILLAGE, Big Foot has been found dead. No, not *that* Big Foot. In Olga Tokarczuk's newly translated novel, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead,* eccentric 60-something narrator Janina Duszejko prefers epithets to given names. It's her neighbor Oddball who knocks on her door and takes her to their other neighbor Big Foot's house, where they find his mangled body on the kitchen floor. After calling the police, Oddball tells Janina they must dress him—it would be "inhuman" to leave him in his dirty clothes—which is when they find a deer's bone lodged in his mouth.

The relationship between animals and humans lies at the center of *Drive Your Plow.* The novel is short-listed for the Man Booker International Prize, which Tokarczuk last year became the first Polish writer to win, for her novel *Flights*. *Drive Your Plow,* originally published in Polish in 2009, follows Janina, who is passionate about animal rights and at odds with the many hunters in her community—including, before his death, Big Foot. And his demise is just the beginning of this winding, imaginative, genre-defying story.

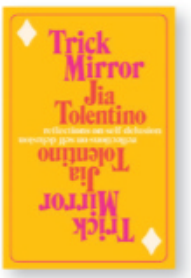
Part murder mystery, part fairy tale, *Drive Your Plow* is a thrilling philosophical examination of the ways in which some living creatures are privileged above others. Tokarczuk's protagonist is delightfully specific: she studies astrology, translates William Blake's poetry and makes bizarre proclamations ("I must always wash my feet thoroughly before bed"). As more bodies pile up, Janina inserts herself into the investigations. The people around her don't find her quite as amusing; the police brush her off as a crazy old lady. But she believes there must be a tie between the dead bodies and the routine killing of animals, even if nobody wants to hear it. The novel turns from humorous and outlandish to controlled and commanding as Janina methodically ties the victims' horoscopes to their brutal deaths.

Though Tokarczuk builds suspense with swift and urgent prose, what captivates most is Janina's intensity, stemming from her experience of the world as an outsider and an advocate for the voiceless. She proves that her demands are ones worth heeding, challenging the ways in which people decide who—and what—is worth protecting. ◻

NONFICTION

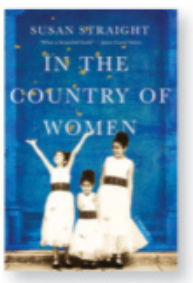
# Looking inward, looking back

In these buzzy August releases, three writers explore how they became who they are and where they fit into the world:




**TRICK MIRROR**
**By Jia Tolentino**
The nine essays in the *New Yorker* writer's debut collection poke at the unnerving anxieties that plague contemporary society, from the pervasiveness of scamming to what it means to live a life on the Internet.

**THE YELLOW HOUSE**
**By Sarah M. Broom**
Broom paints a stirring portrait of New Orleans as she explores 100 years of family history through the home where she was raised, which was later destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.




**IN THE COUNTRY OF WOMEN**
**By Susan Straight**
Straight's memoir, addressed to her three daughters, chronicles six generations of female ancestors from Switzerland to Jim Crow–era Mississippi.
—*A.G.*

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*Williams, Tremblay and Noon: bad as they want to be*

REVIEW

# *Good Boys* bodes well for the men of the future

By Stephanie Zacharek

LONG BEFORE THE RISE OF THE #METOO MOVEMENT, modern moms had begun raising their sons to be respectful of women, to ask permission before touching and to generally check their sense of entitlement at the door. The era of the pint-size gentleman has—possibly—arrived. But even the most evolved moms and dads can't teach their kids everything. The sweet-spirited comedy *Good Boys* is all about the things boys of a certain age just can't figure out: How do you kiss a girl (after you've gained consent)? What are tampons really for? Are nymphomaniacs girls who like to set fires?

Max, Thor and Lucas (Jacob Tremblay, Brady Noon and Keith L. Williams) are three suburban sixth-graders who are fairly low on the social totem pole but don't much care. These three—who call themselves the Bean Bag Boys—hang tight, mostly riding around on their bikes and playing Ascension. But their tween utopia is about to change. The local tough boys—who strut around, hilariously, in spiky-slick hair and sunglasses, like mini-greasers—challenge them to a beer-drinking contest. (The record so far is three sips.) Aspiring pop star Thor, afraid that drinking will hurt his singing career—he's about to try out for the school musical—refuses, thus earning the humiliating nickname Sippy Cup. Sweet, nerdy Lucas is informed by his parents (played by Retta and Lil Rel Howery) that they're splitting up; at the musical tryouts the next day, he mimes his way dejectedly through "Walkin' on Sunshine." And future excellent boyfriend Max has a crush on a schoolmate, a fetching skateboarder named Brixlee (Millie Davis); the tough kids have invited him to a kissing party, and she's going to be there. The mechanics of kissing are a mystery to him, and when he panics, his posse comes to his rescue. One of their first steps is to search "porn" on the Internet, their quest momentarily derailed when they type "porb" instead.

*Good Boys* is filled with enjoyably dumb, innocent gags like that. When the trio finally do locate some good old-fashioned Internet porn, a corny skit involving a stepmom and her grown stepson, they're so appalled they run screaming from the computer. The movie, directed by Gene Stupinsky and written by Stupinsky and Lee Eisenberg, spins on their clueless naivete, though these kids do drop the *F* bomb a lot.

**THAT IS, PERHAPS,** their biggest outlet for rebellion: otherwise, they're so earnest and well-intentioned that they might not even seem real. Aghast at the mere mention of drug use, they're appalled when they learn that two older neighborhood teenagers (played by Molly Gordon and Midori Francis) have procured some MDMA to take at a concert.

Even so, they do get into trouble, mostly involving the loss of an expensive drone that Max has covertly borrowed from his father, for use in his smooch-technique research. There's also a harrowing scene in which the three cross multiple lanes of freeway traffic. Kids, don't try this at home.

But then, *Good Boys* isn't for kids—it's merely about them, and it captures the essence of being young and mystified and just too embarrassed to ask anyone about all the things you just don't have a clue about. In its exploration of male guilelessness, it's something of a middle-school version of the 2007 *Superbad*. (Seth Rogen is credited as a producer on both.) And mostly, with the exception of a tiresome, protracted gag involving a parental stash of sex toys, it's more funny and charming than it is raunchy. If these boys are the men of the future, their parents have done something right. □

***'Don't be afraid to swear, just go for it. In movies like these, it's never too much.'***

**JACOB TREMBLAY,** to Collider, on the advice his mom gave him for his role in *Good Boys*

GOOD BOYS: UNIVERSAL; AMERICAN FACTORY: NETFLIX; BLINDED BY THE LIGHT: WARNER BROS.

*A Fuyao Glass worker*

REVIEW

## China comes to the heartland

Americans need jobs. Does it matter what those jobs are? *American Factory*—directed by veteran documentary filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert, and the first film from Barack and Michelle Obama's Higher Ground slate on Netflix—asks that question and many more, though no one has easy answers.

In 2014, a wealthy Chinese industrialist bought a shuttered Dayton, Ohio, General Motors plant and reopened it as Fuyao Glass America, an auto-glass manufacturer. Many former GM employees who'd been unemployed for years were relieved to get jobs there. But rifts soon became apparent, thanks in part to differences between the Chinese and the American work ethic. American workers were frustrated by pay rates that were generally around half what they'd been making at GM, and their efforts to unionize failed. Chinese employees, many stationed at the American plant for two-year terms, missed their families at home and were bewildered by an American system in which workers put in just eight hours a day, with weekends off. *American Factory* provides a sharp look at shifting U.S. labor practices, even as it opens a window onto the greater issue of what work means to human beings—period. —*S.Z.*

REVIEW

## The magic of the Boss crosses an ocean

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN HAS BEEN A worldwide, stadium-filling superstar for so long now that it's easy to forget that many of us first heard his music in far more intimate settings, spinning on a record player late at night or rushing through a set of earphones like a private, secret symphony. *Blinded by the Light,* directed by Gurinder Chadha *(Bend It Like Beckham)* and adapted from a memoir by Sarfraz Manzoor, reminds us that the whole point of art, and of music, is its power to reach us in deeply personal ways. Javed (played by charismatic newcomer Viveik Kalra) is a British-Pakistani teenager growing up in the dead-end town of Luton, circa late 1980s. He's dying to get out; getting good grades and going off to university is his best hope. He also writes poems and stories—one of the former is titled "Luton Is a Four-Letter Word"—though that enterprise is frowned upon by his father Malik (Kulvinder Ghir), who controls his family by forcing them to conform to strict Pakistani cultural conventions.

Then Javed discovers Springsteen's music, songs about being held back by small-town thinking, of wanting to take a wrong turn and just keep going. He's astonished at the songs' almost mystical connection with his own life, which only gets harder: Malik loses his job, and Javed's mother Noor (Meera Ganatra, in a gorgeously subtle supporting performance), an at-home seamstress, is forced to take in almost more work than she can bear. Meanwhile, Britain's National Front menaces Javed's neighborhood: it's bad enough to feel out of place in your own family, without hatred and bigotry threatening that family's right to exist in the first place.

Javed has to learn that no one's music can solve all his problems, and the movie winds up in a place that's easy to predict beforehand. But that hardly matters. Chadha uses Springsteen's music in vivid, creative ways—for instance, projecting the lyrics of "Promised Land" in swirling letters against a sand-colored brick wall, as Javed, feeling imprisoned in his own skin, his own life, is pinned against it by a buffeting windstorm. Joyous and funny even as it strikes the occasional melancholy chord, *Blinded by the Light* is a testament to the small miracle of how the right music manages to find us at just the right time, even when it has to travel from New Jersey all the way to that four-letter word, Luton. —S.Z.


*Javed (Kalra) feels the music of Springsteen*

REVIEW

# The doctor as detective

By Judy Berman

*On the Netflix series* Diagnosis, *patients whom doctors have struggled to heal take center stage*

FOR MANY OF DR. GOOGLE'S MOST ANXIOUS patients—the ones who consult WebMD's Symptom Checker more often than the weather report—Lisa Sanders is a household name. A physician and author based at the Yale School of Medicine, Dr. Sanders has been writing a column called "Diagnosis" for the New York *Times* Magazine since 2002. Each edition follows a patient with a mysterious ailment from desperation to, yes, diagnosis, like a whodunit where the culprit lurks somewhere beneath the skin of a victim who can almost always be saved. These doctor-as-detective stories provided the basis for Fox's *House.*

Sanders' oeuvre takes a new form on Aug. 16 with the Netflix docuseries *Diagnosis,* a more straightforward adaptation of her column. In place of Hugh Laurie's misanthropic Dr. House, with his prickly bedside manner, we get the reporter herself, a keen-eyed and empathetic interlocutor who seeks answers for some of America's most perplexing patients. More than the comforts of a tidy procedural, each episode offers a moving case study of a life derailed by an affliction that has doctors stumped. What unites these very different patients from across the country, many of them kids or young adults, is an urgent need for health care more thoughtful and intensive than what is currently available to them.

By the time we meet each patient, they've exhausted all local resources; some have even sought help at prestigious university hospitals or the Mayo Clinic. Precocious 7-year-old Sadie suffers from frequent, unexplained seizures. Matt has put his college career on hold because of fainting spells during which his heart actually stops. After combing her subjects' medical records and conducting extensive interviews with them and their families, Sanders writes up their stories and posts them online. Videos proposing diagnoses pour in from health care workers, researchers and other patients around the globe. New physicians get involved, new leads emerge, and new tests are performed.

**THIS ISN'T** an aesthetically pleasing show. Occasional surgery footage aside, there's quite a bit of blurry web video. But the wisdom of this compassionate crowd could almost restore your faith in the fundamental goodness of the Internet. (TNT's *Chasing the Cure,* a reality series with a similar premise, inspires less optimism. Its live episodes, hosted by Ann Curry, have an exploitative, game-show feel, building suspense around diagnoses patients react to in real time.)

Voices from across the political spectrum like to boast about the quality of coverage their health care solution would provide. In April, President Trump tweeted a vow that "the Republican Party will be known as the Party of Great HealtCare [sic]." Centrist Democrats counter progressives' support for Medicare for All with the insistence that people who like their private insurance plans should be allowed to keep them.

Yet amid all this bluster, there's been frustratingly little talk about what desirable health care actually looks like. A godsend for its subjects and a compelling watch, *Diagnosis* serves the greater purpose of contrasting the limited care so many Americans receive with the inspiring outcomes of tireless, personalized searches for answers. In one case, doctors in Italy—where health care is publicly funded—perform expensive tests at no cost to the patient. We see how distracted or overworked providers can undermine families' trust in the profession and how breadwinners can get hit with the double whammy of astronomical medical bills and long absences from work. Sanders encounters obstacles at government agencies like the VA and NIH—but in her role as de facto case manager, she never lets patients fall through the cracks.

*Diagnosis* isn't magic. Episodes rarely end in a cut-and-dried cure. But their outcomes are extraordinary enough to feel miraculous nonetheless. ☐

DIAGNOSIS: NETFLIX; LODGE 49: AMC; THE RIGHTEOUS GEMSTONES: HBO

REVIEW

# A place where Duds can be heroes

*Lodge 49* didn't get much attention when it debuted on AMC last summer. It was hard to tell, at first, where this shaggy dramedy about a SoCal surfer, pool guy and golden retriever of a man-child—Wyatt Russell's Sean "Dud" Dudley—who stumbles upon a struggling coed fraternal lodge would lead. But the muted response suited a show that, much like its fictional Order of the Lynx, turned out to be a haven hiding in plain sight. In time, the secretly ambitious series unfolded into an allegory for the eternal conflict between Big Business and nontransactional communities, from families to civic groups.

Season 2, airing on Mondays, is more of the same ruminative, bittersweet, often funny thing. As Dud recovers from a shark bite and his sister Liz (Sonya Cassidy) looks for work after committing white collar career suicide, Dud's fellow Lynxes Ernie (Brent Jennings) and Connie (Linda Emond) take separate journeys to uncover the truth behind the order's lore. In their own ways, each character is looking for a reason to keep going. For all its anticapitalist undertones, *Lodge 49* isn't preaching revolution. It's simply asking whether the 21st century has anything to offer people more motivated by friendship and fulfillment than by money. *—J.B.*

REVIEW

# Danny McBride drags HBO to church

By Judy Berman

THE PITCH SELLS ITSELF: JOHN GOODman plays the patriarch of a televangelist dynasty. And when he gets the spotlight, there are hints of the show *The Righteous Gemstones* could've been. Goodman's Eli Gemstone, who presides over a megachurch and a sprawling family compound, is a true believer in Christ—and a major beneficiary of the prosperity gospel. But he hasn't been himself since the death of his wife Aimee-Leigh (Jennifer Nettles). As the dissonance between Eli's faith and his greed set in, you can see Goodman's mask of backslapping virility slip.

But HBO's *Gemstones,* premiering on Aug. 18, takes only intermittent interest in its characters' internal lives. Created by Danny McBride *(Eastbound & Down),* a writer and actor known for juicing low-hanging fruit, this comedy would rather wring easy laughs out of the selfish, hypocritical and often just stupid Gemstones. Eli's offspring fit broad types: the eldest, Jesse (McBride), has Tom Jones hair, a wife (Cassidy Freeman) in the Phyllis Schlafly mold, an estranged son and a weakness for drunken debauchery. Judy (Edi Patterson), the middle child, is suffocating under the thumb of her sexist family. Their much younger brother Kelvin (Adam DeVine) is the obligatory youth minister, all spiky hair and dated slang.

Though the threats to their empire are many—including Aimee-Leigh's jealous brother Baby Billy, played by Walton Goggins—it's a blackmail video of Jesse running wild in Atlanta that plunges the pathetic siblings into crisis. Sadly, the predictable action-comedy beats that follow overpower Goodman's more restrained role. (A flashback episode is a welcome exception.)

McBride has a flair for comic set pieces: the series opens with a very funny scene at a mass baptism in what turns out to be a Chinese wave pool—complete with sirens, flashing lights and a pop soundtrack—that would've made a great sketch. And there's plenty of potential in a satire of the present-day evangelical community, whose support for politicians like Roy Moore and Donald Trump has called its moral authority into question. McBride, whose characters seem to have stepped straight out of the Tammy Faye Bakker era, just isn't the right storyteller for the job. ◻

*Goodman, center, stars as the paterfamilias of a clan whose business is religion*

# Give peas a chance

By Larissa Zimberoff

AS A CROP, THE PEA HAS RISEN AND FALLEN, BUT TODAY everyone seems to agree it checks the box against the biggest problems plaguing the earth: climate, food and health. From a sustainability standpoint, peas do everything wheat, corn and soy don't. They require less water, are drought tolerant, reduce the need for nitrogen fertilizers because they take nitrogen from the air and store it in their roots, and are an ideal candidate for crop rotation. Want to avoid allergens? Pea allergies are rare; it's why peas are leaving soy in their dust.

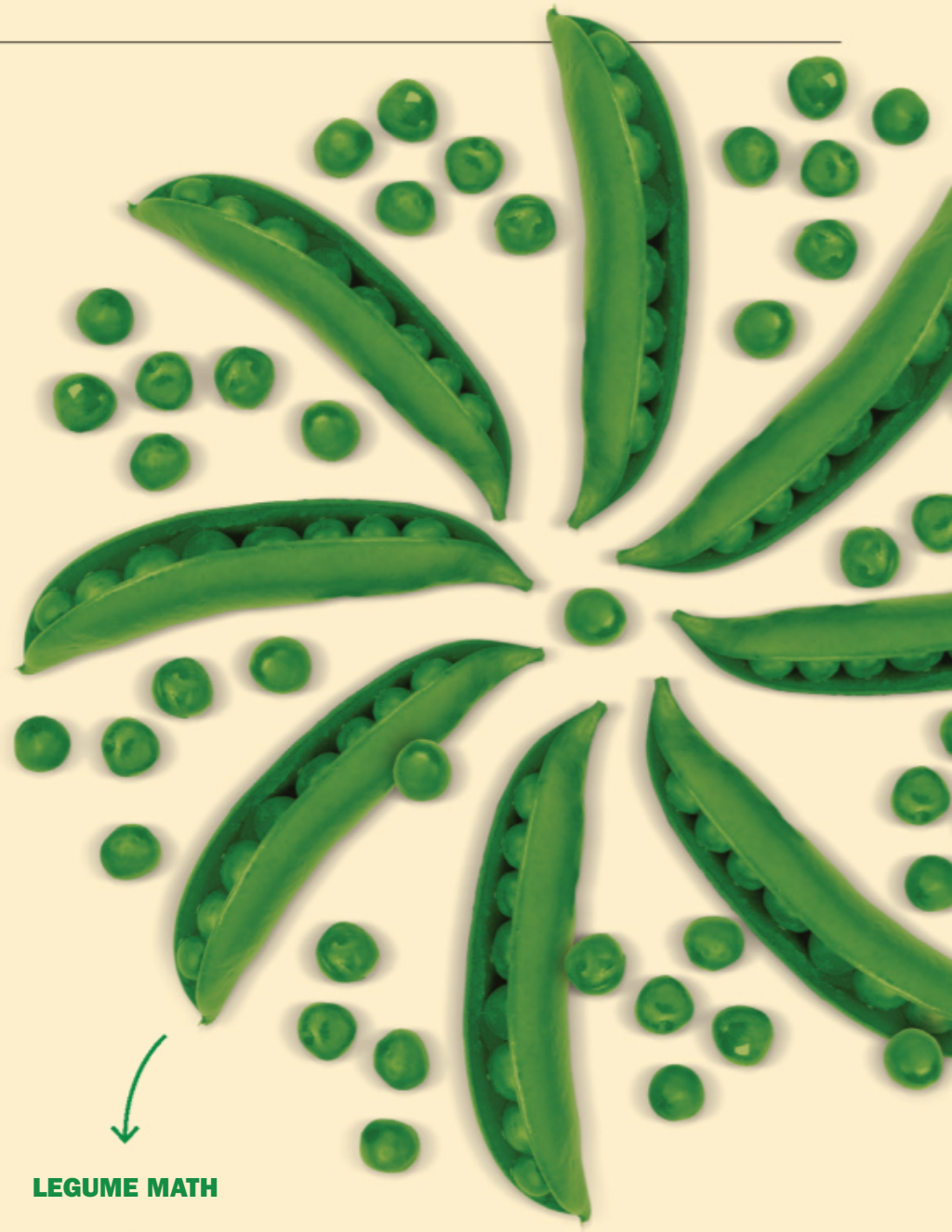
Mintel, the market-research firm, reported that 757 new pea-related foods hit the shelves last year. That's in addition to what's already out there, including the most famous pea food, the Beyond Burger. With one of the strongest IPOs in the past two decades, Beyond Meat is a prime example of our food system's new priority: plant protein.

Peas are easily broken down into building blocks of function: starch, fiber and protein. In China, home to many of the manufacturing plants that do the breaking down, called fractionation, pea-protein isolate is widely thought of as the by-product. Pea starch is used to make noodles, and the leftover protein is shipped to the U.S. McConnell's Fine Ice Creams makes five nondairy flavors starring micronized pea protein; Ripple Foods has sold 7 million gallons of its nondairy milk made of a proprietary yellow-pea protein.

The U.N. named 2016 the International Year of Pulses, which include peas, lentils, chickpeas and beans. That, says Tim McGreevy, CEO of USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council, helped kick off a "paradigm shift toward plant-based foods" in the U.S. "Up until five years ago, the majority of our product was exported," he says. But now the U.S. is getting on board with the rest of the world, where highly adaptable pulses are widely used across cultures. The government is helping to push the trend: in the last two farm bills, it authorized funding for the Pulse Crop Health Initiative, including almost $3 million over 2018 and 2019 to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for proposals that will accelerate our knowledge of pulses.

**HOWEVER, THESE EFFORTS** pale in comparison to those by Canada, which has $115 million earmarked for research into plant protein and plant-based products. Roquette, a French company, is spending $300 million on a pea-protein facility in Manitoba, and Verdient Foods, a pulse-processing facility in Saskatchewan, has a large chunk of investment from married partners James Cameron, the film director, and Suzy Amis Cameron, an environmental activist.

In addition, Canadian companies don't have to deal with the constant threat of retaliatory tariffs. "All of U.S. agriculture has been hugely affected by the tariffs," says McGreevy. "We've been completely shut off of green and yellow peas, and the Canadians are taking full advantage of that." Because the U.S. is no longer a reliable supplier, McGreevy reports that his Chinese counterparts are looking toward the Baltic region of Europe to fill the gap.



LEGUME MATH

**757**
New pea-related food products to hit shelves in 2018

**1.8B**
Pounds of dried peas the U.S. produced in 2015, up from 500 million in 1995

**163%**
Increase in share value of Beyond Meat's stock on its first day of trading

It's not only food manufacturers who see the beauty in peas. If science can make a more protein-packed legume, it could answer the looming question of how to feed our growing population. To that end, an international team is poised to release the entire genomic sequence of the pea. "It puts peas back where they belong," says Rebecca McGee, a plant breeder with the USDA's Agricultural Research Service, who worked on the project. McGee is currently working on a related initiative called MP3—"more protein, more peas, more profit." The goal is to find the genetic nature of protein concentration, which could lead to make a more powerful pea.

There's also a line of plants waiting quietly behind the pea for their 15 minutes. In Canada, Ron Kehrig, deputy director of investments for the Saskatchewan ministry of trade, reports his farmers are testing fava beans and canola seeds. From Beyond Meat, we may soon get sausages made from lupin beans or camelina, mustard and sunflower seeds. The message is clear, and there's a not-too-distant future in which our unsustainable reliance on animal protein is jettisoned for the almost limitless variety of our plant kingdom. ☐

PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY GLUEKIT FOR TIME

*What do you want*
***FOR BREAKFAST?***

*Something*
***DELICIOUS***

*Something*
***HIGH IN FIBER***

Kellogg's
Raisin Bran

# 8 Questions

**George Takei** The actor talks about his new show, *The Terror: Infamy,* and his real-life experiences in an internment camp

**You were in Japanese-American internment camps from ages 5 to 8. What was that like?** We were plunked down in the swamps of southeastern Arkansas. To me, it was an exotic, alien planet. Trees grew out of the water of the bayou that was right next to the barbed-wire fence. I remember catching pollywogs and putting them in the jar. Dragonflies, which I've never seen before. The first winter, it snowed there. I was a Southern California kid. To wake up one morning and see everything covered in white, it was a magical place.

**What was it like for your parents?** For my parents, it was a series of goading terrors, one after the other. But children are amazingly adaptable. We adjusted, and we got used to what would have been a grotesque thing—lining up three times a day to eat lousy food in a noisy mess hall, or going with my father to bathe in a mass shower. When I made the night runs to the latrine, searchlights followed me. I thought it was nice that they lit the way for me to pee.

**What do you remember about the journey there?** I remember the terror of when the soldiers came to our Los Angeles home to order us out, and the confusion and chaos at the Santa Anita racetrack. There was a chain-link fence around the whole racetrack facility. We were unloaded and herded over to the stable area. Each family was assigned to a horse stall. For my parents, it was a degrading, humiliating, enraging experience to take their three kids to sleep in a smelly horse stall. But to me, it was fun to sleep where the horsies sleep.

**When did you understand what you were part of?** It wasn't until I was a teenager that I learned about the reality, the horror, the terror and the injustice of that incarceration. I was inspired by speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King that I heard on the radio and what I read in the newspapers. I read about the ideals of our democracy: all men are created equal. I couldn't reconcile that with what I knew to be my childhood imprisonment and what my parents went through.

*"WE WERE HERDED OVER TO THE STABLE AREA. EACH FAMILY WAS ASSIGNED TO A HORSE STALL"*

**You're both an actor and consultant on AMC's *The Terror: Infamy*. Why did you get involved?** My mission in life has been to raise awareness of this chapter in American history. I'm the last of the surviving generation that experienced internment.

**The series, set during World War II, centers on a series of bizarre deaths that haunt a Japanese-American community. Why tell this story through a horror movie with supernatural elements?** That is organic to the story. The immigrant generation brought with them their old beliefs, superstitions, religious rituals. When people are terrorized—genuine, government-sourced terror—older people cling onto what they found security in. People went crazy. And when crazy people do crazy things, the immigrant generation thought it was the spirit of whatever evil that was done coming to punish them.

**We rarely see the story of internment being told in a major U.S. TV show. Why do you think that is?** It's a shameful chapter of American history. The U.S. looks very bad because it was a horrible mistake.

**How much of the show is historically authentic?** I play the oldest of the immigrants. I went to school in Japan, so I speak Japanese fluently. But I had to learn the Wakayama accent, the old Japanese of the province, to play the part of my character. That's how authentic this is.

—MELISSA CHAN

JESSE GRANT—GETTY IMAGES FOR AMC

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